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The Nation.

November 15, 1986 $1.25; U.K. 85p

EDITORIAL

THE MORNING AFTER

Bright spots: Senators-elect Barbara Mikulski in Maryland and Tim Wirth in Colorado, who ran spirited progressive campaigns; the return of Alan Cranston; the arrival in the Senate of Southerners Wyche Fowler and Terry Sanford and Dakotans Thomas Daschle and Kent Conrad; the new black (John Lewis, Mike Espy) and female (Louise Slaughter, Liz Patterson) faces in the House; the prospect of Ted Kennedy as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Claiborne Pell as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; the repudiation of Ronald Reagan (one wag said he had Teflon coattails) and the repudiation of Reaganism.

Disappointments: the defeats in New York of ultraliberal Bella Abzug for the House and consumer activist Mark Green (falsely portrayed as an ultraliberal) for the Senate; the defeat of Senate hopefuls Bob Edgar in Pennsylvania, Harriet Woods in Missouri, and of Chief Justice Rose Bird in California.

Hopeful signs: the black vote, which was solidly Democratic and made a significant difference in Senate races in California, Louisiana, North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. Delegate counters at the party's convention in 1988 will have to reckon with this vote.

Unhopeful signs: the failure of the Democrats to offer an alternative program, to make the case against Star Wars and the *contras*, to address the dangers of the growing national security state, the two-class society and Meesian jurisprudence.

Vacuum: a natural national Democratic leader to head the ticket in 1988.

Dark horses: most distressing, Sam Nunn; most intriguing, Michael Dukakis.

Slender thread: the possibility that Reagan, having been rejected at one remove at the polls, will consolidate his place in history by striking a nuclear disarmament deal with Gorbachev.

OHIO NUKES
Harvey Wasserman

STRUGGLE IN MOSCOW
Stephen F. Cohen

ARSON PAYS
Michael Jacobson
Philip Kasinitz

MOZAMBIQUE
Pauline H. Baker

BASQUES
Gabriel Jackson

CHESTER HIMES
Fred Pfeil

CONTRA SUPPLY SCANDAL

AND NOW, POSADAGATE

Ever since Eugene Hasenfus disclosed the identity of two Cuban-Americans who directed contra *supply flights out of El Salvador, the spotlight has focused on one Max Gomez, allegedly a friend of Vice President George Bush. The second man, one Ramon Medina, has remained in the shadows. According to Hasenfus, Medina organized* contra *finances and transportation and handled liaison with the U.S. Embassy. The Sandinistas claim Medina is in fact Luis Posada Carriles, a notorious terrorist.*

Fourteen years ago in Washington, a bungled break-in involving Cuban-Americans with C.I.A. ties prompted an investigation that eventually brought down a President. Today, though the prima facie evidence of a scandal involving U.S. officials is stronger than what was available in the early days of Watergate, editors and legislators have ignored it, shrugging off the Posada affair as a Sandinista-Cuban invention. In the story that follows, John Dinges presents compelling independent corroboration of the identity of Ramon Medina. With Democrats again in control of the Senate, a full investigation of Posada and the contra *supply scandal should be the first order of business.* —*The Editors*

On October 6, 1976, a Cubana Airlines DC-8 was making its weekly run between Seawell Airport, Barbados, and Havana with seventy-three people aboard. The flights were symbolic of a growing rapprochement between Cuba and its Caribbean neighbors. Minutes after takeoff a bomb destroyed the plane. There were no survivors. Luis Posada Carriles and three other Cuban exiles living in Venezuela—including Orlando Bosch, the head of CORU, the most militant of anti-Castro terrorist groups—were charged with the crime. In August 1985, Posada

(Continued on Page 589)

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LETTERS.

NOT-SO-RISKY BUSINESS

Alexandria, Va.

Brian Jacobs's September 6 article, "Increasing Our Radiation Dose," typifies the kind of one-sided scare tactics practiced by some environmentalists. It presents a litany of old contentions by radiation extremists, whose charges have been refuted by reputable scientists with impressive credentials and lengthy records of sound publications.

Take, for example, the reference to a contention that surveys made by Dr. Carl Johnson demonstrated increased cancer mortality among certain Mormons living in southwestern Utah—an excess attributed to radioactive fallout from Nevada tests. Apart from the fact that Johnson's survey violated basic rules of epidemiology, there is now convincing evidence that fallout in Utah could not have caused such an excess. Bricks taken from Mormon homes were studied by scientists at the University of Utah for fallout radiation doses. There was not sufficient exposure to cause even one cancer death, assuming that even small amounts of radiation could cause cancer.

Jacobs piggybacks the Chernobyl accident by reraking the ashes of Three Mile Island. Make no mistake about it. Chernobyl was a disaster, releasing 100,000 times the radioactive exposure of T.M.I. But T.M.I. radioactive emissions such as iodine-131 were "bottled up" by containment. Proof of this is the fact that whole-body counts of 762 persons from the T.M.I. area showed that "None had body levels of iodine-131 above the minimum detectable activity of two billionths of a Curie." (Quoted from page 25 of the General Public Utilities report "Radiation and Health Effects.") Unlike Jacobs, the G.P.U. report presents both sides of the radiation story.

Jacobs implies that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is about to make regulatory changes in radiation-risk management that will "increase our radiation dose." I have been concerned about minimizing radiation risk ever since my first exposure to radiation while working on the A-bomb project. As a consultant to nuclear utilities, I recommend radiation-dose limits that are even more stringent than those set by the N.R.C. Clients such as Baltimore Gas & Electric, operator of the Calvert Cliffs nuclear power plants on Chesapeake Bay, take my advice. My study of lifetime records for 9,500 radiation-monitored workers shows their average individual dose was 0.6 rem; that's a cancer risk equal to that of smoking two cigarettes a year.

Environmentalists do not serve the public interest when they present one-sided views of radiation risk. As an occupational risk, radiation is minuscule compared with the risks associated with activities such as smoking.

Ralph E. Lapp

JACOBS REPLIES

Brooklyn

I did not *imply* that there will be an increase in permissible doses; I stated it categorically. The N.R.C. is planning to permit a significant increase in both occupational and public exposures to radioisotopes which the commission considers to be dangerous. The N.R.C. also plans to uphold the anachronistic whole-body dose, or total permissible yearly exposure, in spite of strong evidence that the thirty-year-old standard substantially underestimates the dangers of radiation doses.

Rather than address those points—which are central to my article—Lapp proffers red herrings and diatribes.

He cites a report produced by General Public Utilities (owner of the Three Mile Island facility) as evidence that the people around its plant have nothing to worry about. He suggests that G.P.U. is presenting both sides. Lapp confidently asserts that an average dose of 0.6 rem among 9,500 workers over a lifetime represents a cancer risk equal to that of smoking two cigarettes a year, when there is still tremendous uncertainty about the risk from such exposures. His estimate, which he states as fact, can be construed only as the lowest possible risk assessment.

Lapp cites a Department of Energy study of Mormon masonry that shows that the D.O.E.'s bomb-testing program left the civilians downwind of the test sites unscathed. Aside from the conflict of interest involved, bricks are not people. Because much remains unknown about radiation's health effects at low doses, whatever level of radiation is found in the fallout areas will not determine the number of cancers caused. There have been ten separate epidemiological studies showing the correlation between cancer deaths and bomb testing. Even the government-run National Cancer Institute has shown, in a study of Washington County, Utah, that cancer rates increased in the fallout areas. Still, the fundamental issue is whether the N.R.C. is justified in relaxing radiation standards. Most scientists now agree that the risk from ionizing radiation is far greater than was assumed when the current standards were adopted.

The scientific debate on radiation's health effects has not abated. But that debate has become virulently political because of the enormous stakes involved for both the government and the nuclear power industry: a tenfold reduction in the permissible dose would close down most of the nuclear power industry and would cost the government billions in compensation claims and renovation of its weapons facilities.

Certainly, suspicion of the government's science is warranted. Many "reputable scientists with impressive credentials and lengthy records of sound publications" also have lengthy records of gross negligence, of cover-ups and of suppressing research under the aegis of the Atomic Energy Commission, as has been made abundantly clear since the A.E.C. files were opened in 1979. Government science agencies have a great task before them if they wish to restore public confidence in their work. The relaxing of radiation standards indicates they have little desire to do so.

Scientific discussion of this issue is polarized when nuclear advocates such as Lapp accuse those with dissenting opinions of being extremists. Karl Morgan, for example, founder of health physics and a pre-eminent expert on the health effects of radiation, is hardly an extremist. He spent twenty-nine years with the A.E.C. as one of the directors of Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and he always believed in the nuclear option—so long as it was done safely. Morgan, who was responsible for setting the current standards, has said that those standards underestimated risk by at least a factor of ten.

Lapp's letter shows him clearly aligned with industry, which has consistently tried to trivialize, rather than minimize, the radiation health risk.

Brian Jacobs

WE BLINKED

Williamsport, Pa.

The cover editorial in the October 11 issue of *The Nation*, "Winkin' Blinkin' and Ron," refers to Gennadi Zakharov's day in court and states, "He was charged with a crime, conspiracy to commit espionage, whose penalty, life imprisonment, may not be suspended under Federal law." That sentence is misleading. It creates the impression that there is only one penalty, life imprisonment, for the crime of conspiracy to commit espionage. That is incorrect.

The relevant statute, 18 U.S.C. §794, Gathering or Delivering Defense Information to Aid Foreign Government, provides that a violation of the statute "shall be punished by death or by imprisonment for any term of years or for life." A defendant convicted under this statute may be sentenced to death, to a term of life imprisonment or to a term of any number of years by the sentencing judge. The editorial is correct that the sentence may not be suspended.

Judge Malcolm Muir
United States District Court

CORRECTION

Due to a transcription error, a line in Michael Massing's reply to Reed Irvine's letter last week stated that Irvine had "written to all those . . . quoted in the piece demanding to know why they don't respect him." It should have said that Irvine had written to many, not all, of those quoted.

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EDITORIALS.

Tune In, Turn Off

Political analysts have described the 1986 elections as the most negative contests in U.S. history. That may be an exaggeration. After all, the rumbustious campaigns of the nineteenth century produced such slogans as "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion," "Blaine, Blaine, the Continental liar from the state of Maine" and "Ma! Ma! Where's my pa? / Gone to the White House / Ha! ha! ha!" Even Honest Abe was depicted by cartoonists as an ape. Still, most this year's candidates found it more effective to challenge their opponents to produce a urine sample than to offer a program for creating jobs.

Negative campaigns are made for television, where emotion and image register more indelibly than ideas and ideology. The technique was used successfully by right-wing PACs in 1980 and 1984, and the Democrats, in their current me-too posture, imitated them this year. An added dividend of negativism is that it relieves a candidate of the onus of offering a program that might offend someone. We are in the age of a no-fault President and a gutless Congress, which attempts to reduce the budget through the impersonal machinery of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings or, in the case of

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the House, passes two antidrug bills, one with the death penalty and one without it. Candidates who avoid issues are merely training for the job.

The strategy of negativism produced its own antithesis in Pennsylvania, where gubernatorial candidate William Scranton 3d announced that he had canceled all commercials tearing down his opponent, Robert P. Casey. The next wave of Scranton commercials showed various prominent figures burbling about what a fine man their candidate was because he had stopped the mudslinging. Casey's media mentors riposted with an upbeat paean to their man's vision of a greater Pennsylvania, with zero unemployment and happy children picking flowers—which reminds us that positive commercials need not be any more issue-oriented than negative ones.

This year's vogue for calumny may well pass, but the trend toward campaigns in which candidates rely exclusively on television to communicate with voters will continue, even though two of the major networks declined to drop their usual Tuesday night fare to cover the returns. Already political consultants are test-marketing their clients' audiovisual clout by exposing their screen images to sample groups of voters, like TV producers testing a sitcom. Once the hopeful's shortcomings are discerned, he or she is then made over—aviator glasses to replace horn-rims, for example.

But cosmetic changes can go only so far, as even made-for-media Ronald Reagan illustrated on election eve when he sympathized with voters who, he said, no longer want to "follow the leadership of the Republican Party...down a course that leads to disaster." The next step may be to replace candidates with an onscreen image designed to the media consultant's specifications. The cable television "personality" known as Max Headroom provides a model. Max is a computer-generated image whose voice is supplied by a living person. Why not computer candidates, who can serve as the real candidates' stand-ins? The human prototypes would drudge in the statehouse or the legislature, while their pixilated alter egos would handle their appearances on the box. The Republican Party should consider a Max type to lead the ticket in 1988. It would be the perfect successor to Ronald Reagan.

Nukes of the Ohio

Columbus, Ohio

An increasingly bitter fight over a $4.2 billion nuclear plant on the shore of Lake Erie could doom what remains of the U.S. atomic power industry. Opposition to the Perry double-reactor facility, thirty-five miles east of Cleveland, was limited to a dogged handful of activists until last January 31. Then an earthquake measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale struck ten miles from the Perry core. The quake astounded even critics of nuclear power, who have long mocked the industry for its propensity to put reactors on seismic fault lines. The issue was raised at Perry but ignored by Cleveland Electric Illuminating (C.E.I.), which dismissed a suspicious-looking natural trench through the site as a "geologic anomaly." Opponents had pointed to a history of tremors in the area, including one earlier in this decade, but their fears were disregarded by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission which, following its normal procedure, has consistently given C.E.I. the green light.

The jolt from the January 31 quake, however, was the first officially to exceed the design capacity of a U.S. reactor. N.R.C. and C.E.I. inspectors quickly deemed numerous leaking pipes and cracks in the concrete "not significant," and a license to run the reactor at 5 percent capacity was issued.

But the quake also knocked out roads and bridges and raised new fears that evacuation plans might be inadequate. After the disaster at Chernobyl two bus drivers' unions in Ohio announced publicly that despite C.E.I. and N.R.C. assurances of safety, in the event of a meltdown their members would not drive back into contaminated areas to chauffeur a mass evacuation.

There is now a full-scale opposition movement in the four counties surrounding the plant. The commissioners of Cuyahoga County, which has 1.5 million residents, are demanding a halt to the licensing process until the evacuation plans can be re-evaluated. As County Commissioner Tim Hagan puts it, "Cleveland is closer to Perry than Kiev was to Chernobyl." In largely rural Geauga, Ashtabula and Lake counties, all of which have territory inside the ten-mile emergency zone mandated by the N.R.C., canvassers and one local poll reported 70 to 80 percent opposition to the plant's opening.

On August 15, Governor Richard Celeste rescinded his earlier approval of the evacuation plans and asked N.R.C. chair Lando Zech to halt the Perry licensing process until the evacuation plan could be studied by a three-member state panel. He asked that the same be done for the Davis-Besse reactor, which opened in 1977 near Toledo. Built by Babcock & Wilcox of Three Mile Island fame, that reactor has been rated one of America's worst and has been closed since June 1985 pending an overhaul of safety measures. Toledo Edison, which recently merged with C.E.I. after being cited by the N.R.C. for having too little funding to operate Davis-Besse safely, hopes to reopen the reactor sometime this fall.

In early September, Zech informed Celeste that the N.R.C. would license Perry and also allow Davis-Besse to reopen whenever it saw fit. As Celeste put it, Zech "said politely he doesn't give a damn what Ohioans think." On October 30 the N.R.C. voted to bar the state from intervening in its decisions. In return, the state reaffirmed its commitment to take the commission to court if it grants a license before Ohio's study of evacuation plans is completed, probably at the end of the year.

The outcome of such a confrontation could have enormous implications. A Federal District Court in New York State has already declared that, in the case of the Shoreham plant, evacuation planning is indeed a state and local prerogative. In late September, Massachusetts Governor

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Michael Dukakis announced he would not submit evacuation plans, as license regulations require, for the reactor in Seabrook, New Hampshire, whose ten-mile emergency protection zone reaches into the Bay State.

But the New York evacuation fight has been put on the back burner as the state moves to take over Shoreham entirely, and the Seabrook case may not come to a head for months. (The N.R.C. approved low-level testing at Seabrook despite Dukakis's objections, but it has not yet licensed the plant to generate power.) An N.R.C. green light allowing Perry to go to full power is expected soon. With twenty other nuclear plants under construction, the industry and its opponents will be watching closely to see if Celeste follows through on his threat to do "whatever is necessary" to keep Perry and Davis-Besse shut down while the state continues to re-examine the evacuation plan—and if the courts then come down on his side. If they do, the case would become a watershed for the question of local control of the nuclear licensing process.

In the meantime, the fight has turned ugly. In September an antinuclear speaker at a high school nine miles from the Perry reactor was greeted by a hundred hostile plant workers armed with a four-page dossier which detailed personal information about the speaker stretching back fifteen years. C.E.I. employees disrupted two subsequent meetings, and police were called. C.E.I. is "just scared," says Sue Hiatt of Ohio Citizens for Responsible Energy. "They have decided it is time to fight dirty because they are desperate."

HARVEY WASSERMAN

Harvey Wasserman is an Ohio-based journalist who writes frequently on nuclear issues. He is co-author of Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience With Atomic Radiation. *(Delacorte/Delta).*

Posadagate

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

bribed a prison supervisor and escaped from Venezuela.

Almost ten years to the day after the Air Cubana explosion, Posada has emerged as a key figure in another plane crash—that of the U.S. cargo plane shot down by Sandinista troops on October 5 while delivering weapons to the *contras*. The sole survivor, Eugene Hasenfus, was shown a photograph of Posada by his Nicaraguan captors. According to Sandinista officials, Hasenfus said he knew the man in the picture as Ramon Medina, one of his bosses in the *contra* supply missions.

The Nicaraguan claim was questionable because the Sandinistas had a clear political interest in linking a known terrorist, Posada, with the *contras* and their U.S. backers. Now records obtained from the Salvadoran telephone company, ANTEL, provide the first independent evidence that Medina may in fact be Posada. The records show that frequent calls were made last July from Medina's house in San Salvador to Posada's wife and to two persons known to be Posada's friends in Miami. Nieves Posada refused to discuss her husband's whereabouts, saying only, "Now is the time to keep quiet." *The Miami Herald* reported that she and the two friends acknowledged receiving calls from Posada in recent months.

One of those called was Dr. Alberto Hernández, the Posada family's physician and an activist in Cuban exile efforts to provide aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*. Earlier this year he visited *contra* bases in Honduras to help set up a field hospital. The other friend to receive calls from San Salvador was Syla Cuervo, a veteran of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Cuervo and Hernández serve on a committee to raise money for the defense of Posada and the others implicated in the bombing of the Cuban airliner.

At the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion, Posada received C.I.A. training and gained a reputation for fearlessness behind the lines. In 1967 he went to Venezuela, where he found a market for his anticommunist zeal and his skills in explosives and undercover work. "He was a member of the C.I.A. for many years," Rafael Del Naranco, a Venezuelan journalist, told me. "He worked for the C.I.A. He came here [to Venezuela] to work in the state security forces. He had contacts at the very highest level." Posada was one of several C.I.A.-trained Cubans hired by the security forces, known as DISIP. He eventually became chief of operations.

In May of this year Posada's associates went to great expense to arrange a clandestine television interview between Posada and Rafael Del Naranco, who writes for the Caracas daily *El Mundo*. Del Naranco considers himself a specialist on the bombing of the Cuban airliner and became a friend of Posada's while conducting many interviews with the man in prison.

To get to the meeting, Del Naranco flew from southern Mexico on a single-engine plane that landed on a dirt strip in a tropical area "somewhere in Central America." He said he later learned he was in El Salvador. "I had information from another source. . . . Apparently [Posada's] friends had made contact with President Duarte so he could stay in that country," Del Naranco said.

The White House has denied any knowledge of Posada's presence in El Salvador. But Administration officials have acknowledged they were aware of private supply efforts and have close contact with the Salvadoran military, which runs the air base the *contra* suppliers used. The reports of Posada's central role in those operations suggest complicity between the *contra* leadership and the Salvadoran government in harboring a fugitive wanted for terrorism.

Luis Posada's current whereabouts are unknown. In the television interview he hinted at his plans to fight in Central America: "I feel good here because . . . I am involved once again in . . . a fight against international communism, against Castro in all parts of the world." To Del Naranco he said he would "begin a new style of struggle" from his base of operations: "Rafael, he will have occasion to hear more about me."

JOHN DINGES

John Dinges is a foreign editor of National Public Radio.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

There is hardly a best-seller list that has not featured Oliver Sacks's book *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. This beautifully written and intelligent work is an anthology from the casebook of an accomplished neurologist. There is much fascination and paradox to be had from it, and plenty of nourishment for readers and reviewers. All the same, I am surprised that no one has highlighted Sacks's essay "The President's Speech," which begins with this distinctly seductive paragraph:

> *What* was going on? A roar of laughter from the aphasia ward, just as the President's speech was coming on, and they had all been so eager to hear the President speaking . . .
>
> There he was, the old Charmer, the Actor, with his practised rhetoric, his histrionisms, his emotional appeal—and all the patients were convulsed with laughter. . . . Were they failing to understand him? Or did they, perhaps, understand him all too well?

Sacks explains that aphasia has the following property. The patient, who may be highly intelligent, suddenly loses the power to understand words per se. "There has been a great change, almost an inversion, in their understanding of speech. Something has gone, has been devastated, it is true—but something has come, in its stead, has been immensely enhanced, so that—at least with emotionally-laden utterance—the meaning may be fully grasped even when every word is missed." This means, as every clinical psychiatrist will tell you, that it is impossible to lie to an aphasic. "They have an infallible ear for every vocal nuance, the tone, the rhythm, the cadences, the music, the subtlest modulations, inflections, intonations, which can give—or remove—verisimilitude to or from a man's voice."

Sacks found that aphasics with this capacity were either moved to mirth by the President, or stirred to contempt. One patient, "a former English teacher, and poetess of some repute, with an exceptional feeling for language, and strong powers of analysis and expression," had this to say of the old charmer: "He is not cogent. He does not speak good prose. His word-use is improper. Either he is brain-damaged, or he has something to conceal." I should very much like to meet this patient, and introduce her to one or two editorial writers of my acquaintance.

Sacks concludes this clinical insight into Reagan's style by saying:

> We normals—aided, doubtless, by our wish to be fooled, were indeed well and truly fooled (*"Populus vult decipi, ergo* decipiatur"). And so cunningly was deceptive word-use combined with deceptive tone, that only the brain-damaged remained intact, undeceived.

* * *

I scoured the newspapers after the death of President Samora Machel of Mozambique until I found what I wished not to find. Fernando Honwana was among the dead. This is a bigger loss than most commentators have appreciated. Fernando was a contemporary of mine, and a member of Mozambique's minuscule elite of educated Africans. He could have easily sat out the struggle for the independence of his country from Portuguese colonialism but chose to lay aside his books (he had a good degree from an English university) and sign up and bear arms. After independence, when he became Machel's chief adviser, he was foremost among those who argued against the Soviet model and against the granting of facilities to the Soviet Navy. Mozambique, impoverished and menaced from outside though it was, and is, should keep its independence. He also favored a political rather than a conventional military approach to the South African–sponsored rebels in the countryside. Despite their use of tribalism, torture and mutilation, he believed that the "bandits" were the perverse expression of real problems.

The fact that Zimbabwe achieved liberation without going through a full-scale civil war and a long period of revenge killing (the sort of future that our brilliant leaders are now preparing for South Africa) is very considerably the result of Fernando's efforts. I was with him at the Lancaster House negotiations in London when he acted as Samora Machel's envoy, and I saw how he helped persuade Robert Mugabe that a properly conducted election would not be a trap. You can say what you like about the disfigurement of today's Zimbabwe, but without that crucial decision the country would now more nearly resemble the Congo in the early 1960s. When it was all over, I saw Fernando at a grand party given by the Queen. As always, he was faultlessly dressed and a master of protocol. (It was a pleasure to see the faces of racist diplomats within about ten seconds of having been introduced to him.) After the formalities with Her Majesty, Fernando turned to me and said, with perfect gravity and address, "*Pambere ne Chimurenga*"—the Shona slogan signifying the triumph of the people's war.

It is often forgotten that the movements to liberate Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau had a fourth success to their credit. By their courage and persistence, and by their staunch use of the propaganda of internationalism, they also brought liberty to Portugal. The most solid survivor of European fascism was the Caetano regime in Lisbon, and the millions of Portuguese who celebrated its fall did not always acknowledge their debt to Eduardo Mondlane, Amilcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto and others who had borne the heat and burden of the day. Western democracy had its membership increased by one as a direct result of the battle for the liberation of southern Africa. Fernando incarnated, if that's not too sentimental a term, the indivisibility of this process. He would never have dreamed of putting it so crudely, but there is a real sense in which Western democrats owe him one. It's now more than ever necessary to redeem that obligation, and to take the side of those who want to liberate the South Africans as well as South Africa. I have no idea whether or not Fernando was murdered, but it was already clear that the racists have no conception of the quality and stature of the people they fight. He deserved a better class of antagonist.

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SOVIETICUS.

STEPHEN F. COHEN

"Between the people who want and long for changes and the leadership that encourages them, there is the administrative staff of the party apparatus and the ministries who do not want changes. . . . Take Gosplan [the State Planning Committee]. As far as Gosplan is concerned, there is no authority, there is no General Secretary, no Central Committee. Its officials do whatever they want. . . . The transformation is going ahead. . . . But if you only knew with how much anguish all this is proceeding."

Thus spoke General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, on June 19, at a private meeting with some thirty leading Soviet writers. A partial record of his remarks, made surreptitiously by a participant, was published on October 7 in the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*. Despite its fragmentary nature, there is no reason to doubt the document's authenticity. It corresponds with what writers who were at the meeting have told foreigners and with what Gorbachev has said publicly, but far more guardedly, in recent months.

The remarks of the embattled Gorbachev confirm that his campaign for "radical reform" has aroused what he calls "a resistance that is spreading through all the institutions" of the political system. None of this should come as a surprise, even though American commentators have exaggerated Gorbachev's personal power and seriously underestimated his commitment to domestic change. Many historical and contemporary factors have made the Soviet Union a profoundly conservative country, in which a self-proclaimed reform leader, the first since Nikita Khrushchev, is bound to provoke widespread resentment, fear and opposition.

Indeed, Gorbachev's proposals have collided with many bureaucratic interests and attitudes, as he has complained in speeches throughout the country. Conservative party and state elites oppose his plan to decentralize economic control because it will diminish their "power and privileges." They object to his policy of more freedom in the media and in cultural life on the grounds that it breeds "demagoguery" and undermines "the heroic-patriotic upbringing of our youth." And they protest Gorbachev's calls for a "democratization of society" as a "shaking of our foundations" and as "anarchy." Ideologically, they charge that his proposed reforms are "almost a renunciation of our principles."

Such bureaucratic and elite opposition, according to Gorbachev and his allies, is taking various forms. Ignoring reform directives from above is the most prevalent kind of resistance, but there is also "open sabotage." Letters demanding an end to change are coming to the Central Committee. Word-of-mouth attacks on Gorbachev's policies evidently are rampant in bureaucratic circles. Political bosses are muzzling the local press, which Gorbachev is trying to rally, while superiors frequently harass their reform-minded subordinates in party and state organizations.

Nor can Gorbachev really believe that "the people" unanimously want fundamental reforms. Many of them are alarmed by proposed changes that would sharply increase work standards, food prices and rents. Others, deeply puritanical, are offended by the media's new candor about drug abuse, prostitution and sex education. Still others, for whom vodka has been a way of life, dislike Gorbachev's crackdown in this area. He admitted as much to the writers, expressing resentment about the popular barb that he is not a general secretary but a "mineral [water] secretary," and about related slogans such as "Bring back Brezhnev!"

The extent of anti-Gorbachev opposition at the top of the political system is less clear, but it exists. A majority of the Central Committee's voting members chosen in February are holdovers from the conservative Brezhnev era. That important assembly also includes representatives of the military, which has indicated displeasure with Gorbachev's investment priorities and arms control proposals; bosses from the party apparatus about which he and his allies are increasingly critical; and state overlords of what Gorbachev calls "these wretched planners and ministerial officials."

As for the Politburo, which includes the Gosplan chief, the Prime Minister and a majority of voting members appointed by Leonid Brezhnev and Yuri Andropov, differences in the tone and substance of speeches by its leading figures have suggested disagreements over critical domestic issues. Speaking privately to the writers, Gorbachev discarded the usual pretense of leadership unanimity with an elliptical yet blunt comment: "About the situation within the Politburo: clashes and arguments do occur."

None of this means Gorbachev must fail, only that the struggle over a Soviet reformation is now intense and widespread. As under Khrushchev, millions of ordinary citizens, thousands of party and state officials and many members of the intelligentsia want the changes Gorbachev is promising. Despite ominous references in closed official circles to Khrushchev's fate, the present danger is less that Gorbachev will be overthrown than that he will be transformed by intractable obstacles into a status quo leader, into another Brezhnev.

Much therefore depends on Gorbachev's qualities as a leader. If his recent public and private statements are any indication, he is a missionary reformer whose determination is acquiring heroic—some Russians say quixotic—proportions. He speaks not only of modernizing the economy but of establishing "the true face of socialism," as though it did not exist in the Soviet Union. While worrying privately about powerful elites who want "to manipulate or bring down the new party leadership," publicly he proclaims, "We will not retreat." And instead of tactically concealing the magnitude of his program, he announces that it means "a real revolution" and that he has "bolder measures" in mind. As he told the writers on June 19, "We have not yet done anything; we have only just started along the path."

All the greater shame that the Reagan Administration still refuses, despite Gorbachev's major concessions, to end the strategic arms race, a cessation the Soviet leader desperately needs to move along the reformist path. Instead, wittingly or unwittingly, the United States has allied itself with those conservative Soviet elites who stand in the way.

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ARTICLES.

WHY ARSON PAYS

Burning the Bronx for Profit

MICHAEL JACOBSON AND
PHILIP KASINITZ

Last year six men in New York City were convicted of committing arson to obtain insurance proceeds. That case, small as it was, is the largest such prosecution in the city's history, and it reveals a great deal about why wild fires have consumed parts of the South Bronx and other urban areas. Unfortunately, its lessons are being ignored by investigators, criminologists and insurance companies.

The conviction of Bernard Gold and Eugene Bell, both insurance brokers and Bronx landlords, along with a number of hired "torches" and insurance adjusters on Federal conspiracy charges in connection with fifty fires in seventeen buildings between 1976 and 1979 provides a textbook explanation of the complex world of arson for profit. It demonstrates that the normal business practices of some of the world's most prestigious insurance companies made the burning of the Bronx profitable, and that uncoordinated investigation efforts made it easy.

The case shows how simple it can be to insure buildings for vastly more than they are worth, and how little attention some insurers pay to the condition of the properties they insure or to the track records of the landlords with whom they do business. Finally, it reminds us that many reputable insurance companies are reluctant to undertake their own investigations of suspicious fires or to help law-enforcement agencies pursue criminal charges.

Contrary to popular belief, few insurers make money from insurance; that is, the premium dollars received seldom amount to a profit once losses and operating expenses are deducted. But insurance premiums provide millions of dollars that may be skillfully invested. Thus, when interest rates and investment income are low, as they are today, insurers are quick to reduce risks and drop whole categories of policies. But when investment income is high, as it was in the late 1970s, losses on the insurance side of the business are easily offset by profits made on premium dollars. The general maxim in the industry is that the insurer should attempt to break even on insurance, but when investments are profitable and competition for capital is stiff, that is seldom possible or necessary.

Insurers generally do not like to talk about loss ratios—the amount of losses they can afford given anticipated profits from investment—but in inner-city fire insurance they are often high, and different companies are willing to accept different levels of risk. Companies based out of state or overseas, known in the industry as "nonadmitted excess and surplus line carriers," are largely exempt from state and local insurance regulations. Those insurers can usually tolerate higher losses—that is, more fires—than more heavily regulated in-state, "admitted," companies. In the excess and surplus category, companies range from highly responsible firms to daredevils willing to take huge risks in light of what they hope to be huge investment profits. Therefore, no property is inherently such a bad risk that it is uninsurable: a terrible risk when you are anticipating a 10 percent return on your investments may not look nearly so bad when you anticipate a return of 25 percent. The kinds of risks an insurer is willing to take depend on the investment climate, the company's cash flow requirements, the level at which the company is reinsured and other factors having little to do with the property in question. Gold and his associates were counting on the underwriters' willingness to take great risks when, through shady intermediaries, they insured buildings they planned to burn with, among others, Heritage Insurance of Illinois, Atlantic and Gulf States Insurance Company of South Carolina and, most prominent, the Sasse Syndicate of Lloyd's of London.

During the mid-1970s the need for capital made many insurers look again at inner-city areas that they had written off after the riots of 1967 and 1968. This turn of events caught community activists by surprise. "We found that redlining was no longer the problem," notes Ron Hine, project director for Brooklyn's Flatbush Development Corporation, referring to insurance companies' previous unwillingness to underwrite business in poor areas. "The problem was overinsurance. It took us a long time to understand this because, after being redlined, we wanted insurers to come back and do business in our neighborhood, and most did so responsibly. But there were a few questionable characters writing policies on anything, not inspecting the properties, and providing the incentive for arson." This climate persisted until interest rates fell a few years ago.

In New York State, companies in the excess and surplus category were prominent among those who moved into what previously had been considered FAIR plan business (Fair Access to Insurance Requirements, the federally mandated high-risk pools established after the riots). Technically, these companies are not allowed to write a policy in the state unless the risk has already been turned down by five in-state insurers, but the regulations are not vigorously enforced, and the same broker who represents the excess and surplus company may be authorized to decline the policy on behalf of five in-state companies. From 1974 to 1979 the propor-

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tion of fire and casualty insurance policies written in New York State by excess and surplus line companies more than tripled, and their annual premium dollars rose sixfold.

These companies often are not able to monitor the risks they accept or to work closely with local law-enforcement officials. "It takes a huge amount of time and effort just to find out who some of these companies are," notes New York City's veteran Deputy Fire Marshal Mike DiMarco, "and by the time we do locate them they've inevitably already paid out." For small claims, even the most perfunctory investigation may be too costly. In one of the arsons for which Gold and his co-conspirators were convicted, twenty-five gasoline bombs ripped the roof off an occupied Bronx apartment building in the middle of the night. This fact and details of the ferocity of the blaze, in which several firemen were injured, were noted in the standard fire report, available to the public. Nevertheless, when a Bronx insurance adjuster reported to Lloyd's of London that the fire was caused by trash in an elevator shaft ignited by "careless smoking" and assessed the damages at a paltry $21,000, Lloyd's paid, apparently without further investigation. The adjuster received $1,500 for his trouble. Were it not for the confession of the "torch" some years later, his complicity would never have been uncovered.

The expansion of excess and surplus carriers and other companies into the inner-city fire insurance market was facilitated by a simultaneous boom in the world market for reinsurance, or the insurance that insurers take out on their insurance. Reinsurance distributes risks throughout the industry. Being heavily reinsured reduces a company's incentive to screen and monitor its risks carefully. Many of the firms involved in the Gold case appear to have been so heavily protected that they were virtually fronts for reinsurers.

The reinsurer takes a percentage of the premium and assumes a percentage of the risk, which is sometimes extremely high. He may then choose to pass the risk along, in whole or part, to yet another reinsurer. As a wholesaler, the reinsurer buys blocks of risks, with little knowledge of their specifics. Thus the successful reinsurer may generate huge amounts of capital with virtually no overhead. While the risks he assumes are high, the lag time between when a loss is incurred and when he has to pay out, during which time he makes investment income on the premium, can be very long. To write millions of dollars worth of business the reinsurer needs only a telephone and the faith of his fellow insurers that when the time to pay finally comes the money will be there.

Although virtually unregulated, the international reinsurance system worked fairly well until the late 1960s. The community was small enough—a few dozen firms based mostly in Britain and in Western Europe—that, apart from the occasional panic or scandal, the companies could regulate themselves. All that changed by the mid-1970s. New companies, many based in Third World countries and some controlled by governments, began to flourish. Several sprung up in this country, and established U.S. firms, accustomed to writing standard forms of insurance, ventured into the treacherous but lucrative reinsurance market. By 1980, Lynn Brenner of *Institutional Investor*, a conservative trade publication not usually given to excitement, wrote:

> Today risks are reinsured and retroceded so many times . . . that it is impossible to trace the ultimate recipient of the premium. It can bounce 40, 50 times. . . . Fire losses in the Bronx could bankrupt the People's Reinsurance Company of China.

In such a market, agents may misrepresent risks; insurers may put little effort into policing them; and reinsurers may be insolvent, unbeknownst to their clients. Self-regulation becomes ineffective as companies become more competitive over premium dollars and more secretive about their own loss records. Here men like Gold could easily find insurance for their firetraps. His fraudulent losses would pass from his insurance executive co-conspirators, through a maze of U.S.-based intermediaries, then to Lloyd's and, from there, to the Instituto de Resseguros do Brazil (I.R.B.), a company backed by the Brazilian government.

In early 1976 an underwriter in Florida known as Den-Har started to sell fire insurance in the South Bronx at rates approximately one-third those of the FAIR plan. Several Bronx brokers, Gold among them, gave huge amounts of business to Den-Har. It was understood that Lloyd's and other British companies stood behind the policies. On one policy arranged by Gold the name "Lloyd's of Londong" [*sic*] is typed in as the insurer of record. Many owners bought properties apparently with the idea of burning them, and then insured them immediately with Den-Har. Gold actually advanced money to co-conspirators who became the owners of record of these buildings. Buildings purchased for as little as $2,500 from banks and insurance companies, which owned them through mortgage defaults, were insured through Den-Har for between $200,000 and $500,000.

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Den-Har provided what must have been the most flexible insurance Bronx landlords had ever seen. Not only did the company charge low rates and care little about the condition of the buildings, but it was also extraordinarily lax about looking into fire losses. In the aftermath of one fire Den-Har vice president Richard Mamarella reinstated an insurance policy that the arsonists had carelessly allowed to lapse, in return for a $25,000 cut of the settlement. Still, Lloyd's seemed unconcerned when the torrent of losses started to pour in. Before authorizing Den-Har to write anything, Lloyd's had reinsured the entire book of business with the I.R.B. It was only when the I.R.B. refused to pay the claims, stating that it had been the victim of misrepresentation, that this house of cards came tumbling down. Although Lloyd's suspended Sasse from underwriting insurance in December of 1977, the extent of Sasse's losses— more than $45 million— was not known until 1980. That does not count the losses Den-Har passed on to the other British and U.S. companies with which it was associated. Even after the Sasse collapse had been widely reported in the industry press, principals in Den-Har continued to sell fire insurance to companies in various states and overseas. The Den-Har portfolio was quickly placed with other excess and surplus insurers licensed in Bermuda and Illinois and heavily reinsured by companies in Hong Kong and Israel, respectively.

An untold number of Bronx property owners bought policies that made their buildings worth more dead than alive. The properties of Gold and his cohorts, who burned buildings insured by several companies, made up only a small fraction of the Den-Har book. Still, the arson ring did well. For fifty fires, mostly in the East Tremont section of the Bronx, the group received insurance settlements ranging from $7,000 to $309,000. In all, it realized a minimum of $1 million for its small part in the burning of the Bronx.

Walking the streets where those buildings stood, one is struck by how much damage was done for that money—city blocks devastated, forty firemen injured, hundreds of families bereft of their homes and property. The losses probably never looked important to most of the insurers and reinsurers around the world who absorbed them. What appears as a wasteland in the Bronx may be an acceptable loss in the board rooms of London or Lower Manhattan. For most insurers arson for profit is more a problem of public relations than of profitability. The industry's efforts against arson for profit, while substantial, consist almost entirely of education, funding community groups, sponsoring conferences and so forth, but they almost never include altering business practices.

Law-enforcement agencies, too, must bear responsibility for this type of crime. That something was amiss in the Den-Har policies was widely known in the insurance community by late 1977. It was reported in the business press in 1978. Before the decade was out, Sasse's difficulties had led to legal action on three continents. Several principals in Den-Har were investigated by Federal authorities, and in 1982, they were sentenced to prison for insurance fraud. None of this led New York City investigators to follow the paper

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trail to the man with the gas can. Regulatory agencies such as state insurance departments, which normally monitor scandals in the industry, have long regarded arson as a criminal matter beyond their domain. The United States Attorney's office that finally put the Gold case together did not make the connection between the Den-Har insurance cases and the actual burning of buildings until a repentant "torch" walked in off the street and made a detailed confession. Even then, it took four years and the tireless efforts of a highly motivated Assistant United States Attorney, Ruth Glushien Wedgwood, to obtain indictments. Today, ten years after the fires began, a lawsuit brought by the city to recoup some of the costs of demolishing burned-out buildings has yet to come to trial. Clearly, far greater cooperation between the various agencies is required.

Structural reform in the insurance industry is also needed. In the interest of both the industry and the victims of arson, the state must consider regulatory measures. Nonadmitted carriers should be barred from underwriting residential fire insurance. Regulation of the reinsurance industry should also be tightened, requiring companies to retain a larger share of financial liability for the business they do.

Sadly, such reforms are unlikely to be considered seriously in the current antiregulatory atmosphere. Although the "South Bronx," now more the name of an urban condition than a geographical entity, is creeping steadily northward, the public's perception is that the crisis has passed. Today attention is focused on making insurance more readily available. The dangers that arise when insurance is too readily available have been forgotten. Yet the conditions that permitted the arson ring to operate have not changed. Rising interest rates and the need for investment capital could easily re-ignite the fires of the late 1970s. We have been given a rare glimpse into the world of the men who burn our cities, and we have learned nothing. □

AFTER MACHEL'S DEATH

What Next in Mozambique?

PAULINE H. BAKER

The death of Mozambique's President, Samora Machel, in a plane crash in South Africa on October 19 could dramatically change the geopolitics of southern Africa. It immediately triggered speculation of a power struggle in the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo), the ruling party, but Joaquim Chissano, the third-ranking member of the Politburo and, since 1975, the pragmatic Foreign Minister was elected by Frelimo's Central Committee two weeks later.

Pauline H. Baker is senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

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More troubling is the encouragement Machel's death has given to the rebellion being waged by the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo), a South Africa–backed rebel force. Given the complex politics of the region and the strategic location of this impoverished state, whose 1,700-mile coastline stretches from Tanzania to South Africa, the crisis could lead to a U.S. confrontation with the Soviet bloc.

Despite his Marxist views, Machel tried to attract Western investment and foreign aid; he played a moderating role in the politics of the region and held together a country racked by decades of war, economic devastation and natural disasters. Machel helped broker the talks that brought independence to Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, in 1980. With his principal aide, Fernando Honwana, he convinced the guerrilla leaders to accept the terms offered by the British, including guarantees of free elections and reserved seats in Parliament for whites. He also counseled Robert Mugabe, who won those elections, not to precipitate white flight by confiscating or nationalizing property—advice that Mugabe took to heart.

In many ways Machel was an incurable optimist. He believed that peace in Zimbabwe would bring prosperity to his country by ending the bloody attacks on Mozambique, which offered sanctuary to the guerrillas fighting the white government of Rhodesia. But he underestimated the insurgency that fed on internal discontent and economic depression. White Rhodesians started Renamo in 1976 to destabilize the Frelimo government, and after Zimbabwe won its independence, the South African Defense Force took up the job of training and supplying the rebels. Renamo has blown up trains and roads, killed teachers and medical workers, and terrorized villagers, who have likewise been mistreated by the army. Tens of thousands of people have become refugees from the war between Renamo and the Mozambique Army.

Fighting the insurgency forced Machel to become increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union. Frelimo's relationship with the Russians began with military aid during the anticolonial war. Ties strengthened after independence, in 1975, when capital flight in the form of departing Portuguese settlers devastated the new country's economy, and in the early 1980s, when Western countries responded belatedly to Mozambique's drought-induced famine. Machel, however, consistently refused to allow the Russians to build bases and would not rely primarily on Cubans for defense. In March 1984, to the consternation of Moscow, he signed a peace agreement, known as the Nkomati Accord, with his bitter enemy, South Africa. Mozambique and South Africa pledged to stop supplying aid to rebels in each other's countries. Machel began to disarm the African National Congress, the South African liberation movement which had taken sanctuary in Mozambique. Today the A.N.C. maintains only a small diplomatic presence in Mozambique.

Machel justified that move by promising an era of peace and prosperity, hopeful that he could finally undercut the rebellion, come to terms with South Africa and attract Western capital. Washington encouraged those expectations. The White House touted the Nkomati Accord as a victory for constructive engagement. President Reagan said it would "end the cycle of violence" in the region. Just fifteen days before Machel's death, departing U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Herman Nickel said he regarded the signing of the accord as the most important event of his term.

U.S., South African and European businessmen began visiting Maputo, the capital city; a foreign investment code favorable to private enterprise was issued; relations with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund improved. Last year Machel even visited Washington and met with President Reagan. He was told that if he continued to adopt market-oriented economic policies and to keep his distance from the Soviet bloc, he would receive U.S. backing. By that time there was evidence of South African violations of the Nkomati Accord, but Machel did not protest. The State Department wanted to preserve this new regional détente, seeing it as the cornerstone of regional security arrangements that would confine the Russians to Angola, reduce the A.N.C.'s incursions into South Africa, pave the way to a settlement of the Namibia dispute and, by diminishing regional tensions, promote reform in South Africa.

Actually, the Nkomati Accord set Machel up for betrayal and accelerated southern Africa's descent into violence. Last year Pretoria publicly admitted its "technical violations" of the Nkomati Accord but vowed to end its links with Renamo. Nevertheless, the insurgency has grown stronger and more aggressive with South African help. Machel patiently clung to the hope that the accord would benefit Mozambique, but neither substantial investment nor foreign aid materialized. Instead, a right-wing lobby in the United States criticized the $40 million in economic and food aid given to Mozambique in 1985, and began comparing Renamo favorably to the Nicaraguan *contras* and Unita, the rebel

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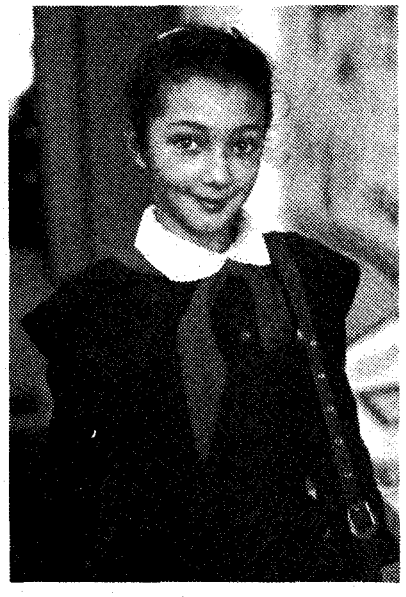
group fighting the Marxist government in Angola. Although the State Department has said that Renamo lacks legitimacy, the Heritage Foundation and the Conservative Caucus support the organization. U.S. aid to Mozambique, always controversial in Congress, has become even more so now that the right is seeking countermeasures to the sanctions enacted against South Africa. On the day of Machel's funeral, Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama made an appeal with the encouragement of U.S. conservatives for the United States to back his movement against the Frelimo government.

Before he died, Machel recognized that his country faced severe new security threats. In September he joined Prime Minister Mugabe and Zambian President Kenneth Kuanda on a visit to neighboring Malawi, the only African country to maintain diplomatic relations with South Africa. They demanded that President Hastings Banda cease supporting Renamo, which was operating out of Malawi. Machel threatened to close Mozambique's borders with Malawi and to install missiles aimed at Renamo bases. He also sent a Cuban-Soviet team to figure out where the missiles should be placed. Rather than turn the rebels over to Machel as the front-line state presidents had insisted, Banda sent them back into Mozambique. An estimated 12,000 troops poured over the border in early October and captured five towns in the northern provinces.

At the same time, Pretoria announced that in retaliation for a land-mine explosion that injured six white soldiers near the Mozambique border on October 6, it was going to stop recruiting Mozambican laborers and expel those already in the country. That action not only confirmed the end of the Nkomati Accord; it also overturned labor agreements between the two countries going back to colonial days. In addition to some 70,000 Mozambicans legally employed in South Africa, twice as many might be working there illegally. South Africa's labor embargo represents a loss for Mozambique of roughly $90 million a year in remittances, about one-third of the country's foreign earnings. It also means that Mozambique's shattered economy must now support tens of thousands of unemployed workers.

Tensions were further exacerbated by belligerent exchanges between the South African Defense Minister, Magnus Malan, and Machel, who had alleged since the September meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Zimbabwe that Pretoria was trying to destroy Mozambique. Machel was returning from a meeting in Zambia with the front-line presidents when his plane crashed into a South African hillside. Thirty-three passengers and crew members were also killed. Many Africans believe that South Africa was responsible for the plane crash. There is no question that hard-liners in Pretoria welcomed Machel's demise. With Mozambique in turmoil, landlocked Zambia and Zimbabwe would be forced to depend on South African ports.

We may never know for certain whether Pretoria shot down the plane, whether the pilot was at fault, whether the crash resulted from sabotage, or whether it was genuinely an accident. What is certain is that the tragedy represents more than the loss of an important African leader and a



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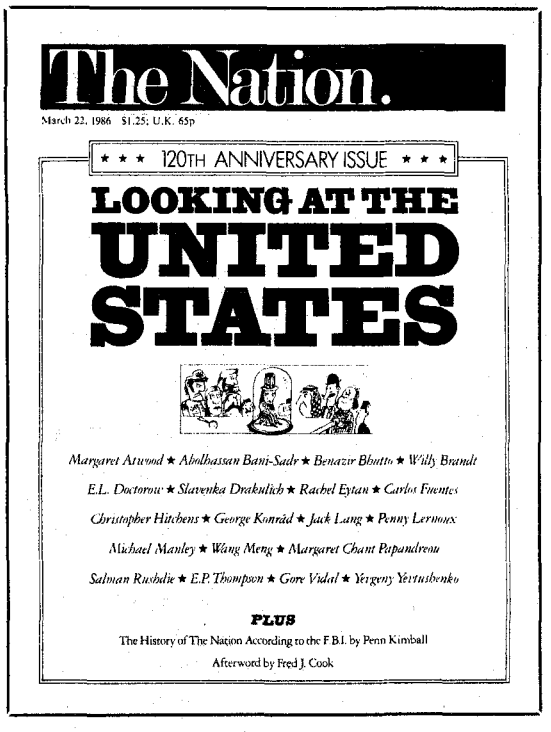
The Nation's 120th Anniversary Issue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great setback for Mozambique. The entire region has been shaken.

Renamo is threatening to launch an offensive on Maputo, which must be defended by the ill-disciplined, ill-fed and ill-trained Mozambique Army. Since Machel's death, the rebel group has declared war on Zimbabwe, following Mugabe's condemnation of Pretoria for killing Machel and his vow that "we are prepared to die to the last man in defense of the sovereignty of Mozambique." Zimbabwe must figure out what to do with its 7,000 to 12,000 troops guarding the Beira corridor, a route across Mozambique that offers a critical outlet to the sea for landlocked front-line states. Malawi, facing retaliation from Mozambique, must decide whether to continue to support Renamo. South Africa obviously has a keen interest in the outcome. It may intervene if Chissano is not able to consolidate power, invites in the Cubans or moves sharply in the direction of the Soviet bloc.

The Russians have acted cautiously in southern Africa since the transition to democracy in Zimbabwe, in 1980, where they suffered a setback by supporting a losing candidate. Carrying a heavy financial burden in Angola, they have not seemed anxious to get involved elsewhere on the continent. But the Soviet Union might encourage the Cubans to pre-empt a South African military strike against Mozambique, a Renamo offensive on Maputo or a power struggle in the divided ranks of Frelimo.

The most alarming scenario would be one in which South Africa intervened directly, or through Renamo, to topple the government. Should Mozambique fall to South Africa or its clients, Pretoria would gain a safe border, closed to the A.N.C., and control of a strategic coast. Washington should recognize what is at stake, warn other countries—especially South Africa—to stay out, and refuse assistance to Renamo. To back Renamo would place the United States on the side of South Africa and possibly provoke the Eastern bloc to intervene, with dangerous repercussions. □

BASQUE ELECTIONS LOOM

Can the Basques Live With Spain?

GABRIEL JACKSON

Barcelona, November 3

Ten years after the death of Generalissimo Francisco Franco two nagging problems threaten Spain's internal stability and the generally successful transition from a reactionary personal dictatorship to a democratic constitutional monarchy. One is the problem of Homeland and Liberty, or ETA, the movement that rejects Spanish sovereignty and advocates armed

Gabriel Jackson, professor emeritus at the University of California, San Diego, is the author of several books on Spanish history. He now lives in Barcelona.

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struggle for the independence of the Basque country. The other is the abuse of police power, which, though not confined to the Basque country, allows much of the Basque population to excuse the many assassinations, kidnappings and extortions perpetrated over the years by ETA. The difficult relationship between the Basque provinces and the central government, a persistent problem, has become front-page news here recently because a split in the Basque Nationalist Party has necessitated special elections for a new Basque parliament, to be held November 30.

Until the recent split there were three principal political forces at work: the Basque Nationalist Party (P.N.V.), the Basque Socialist Party and ETA. Middle-class, democratic, Catholic and localist, the P.N.V. has long been the dominant party. It was the leading member of the autonomous government in 1936-37, of the government in exile in Paris during the Franco dictatorship, and of the governments under the 1979 Statute of Autonomy. The Socialist Party has always been strong in the Basque industrial cities. Its earlier leader, Indalecio Prieto, was the ablest of the democratic socialist leaders during the 1920s and 1930s. The current leader of the Basque Socialists, José Maria Benegas, born in Caracas in 1948 of exiled parents, has followed Prieto's example of maintaining firm parliamentary democratic principles and combining Spanish and Basque loyalties.

In the 1960s ETA was the spearhead of armed resistance to the Franco dictatorship. In the 1970s it espoused women's rights, the libertarian and "green" revolutions and an imprecise version of Marxist-Leninist socialism. At all times it has proclaimed a hatred of the Spanish police as "occupation forces" and has insisted on independence, not only for the three provinces covered by the autonomy statute—Alava, Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya—but for Navarre and several French departments it calls the Northern Basque nation. The leftist doctrines gave ETA a progressive character in the eyes of some non-Basque as well as Basque youth, and its call for independence gave public voice to the secret dreams of many a moderate nationalist.

During the Franco era ETA killed sixty-nine people, many of whom were highly placed military or police officials known as torturers. Since the first democratic elections in 1977, ETA has killed 522 people, often at random. It has acknowledged that several assassinations have been regrettable errors. Because ETA is a secret organization that has gone through many factional splits and changes of leadership, its increasing violence since the death of Franco defies full explanation. However, the main factor is surely the isolation of its members. The majority of Basques have accepted the Constitution of 1978 and the Statute of Autonomy as reasonable bases on which to build a better future. Hundreds of ETA's former comrades have explicitly rejected the armed struggle. Thus, the remaining militants are desperate. No longer the heroes of the resistance to the dictatorship and the vanguard of majority opinion, they have become the sectarian, embittered enemies of both Basque and Spanish democracy.

Despite this indisputable change in the nature of ETA some Basque nationalists still offer ambiguous apologies for its atrocities, such as the planting of car bombs and the killing of numerous innocent people. Many ETA commandos are related to P.N.V. members, who find it hard to condemn their own flesh and blood. There is also an endemic Basque racism, a concern for anthropological "differences" which can easily be transformed into an exaltation of Basque superiority to other peoples of Spain.

Until the parliament was dissolved, the Basque Nationalists held thirty-two seats out of a total of seventy-five. The Socialists had nineteen deputies, and Herri Batasuna (H.B.), the party generally thought to represent the thinking of ETA, held eleven seats, which it did not occupy because, in its opinion, the autonomous parliament is not a democratic body. There is no firm proof that H.B. speaks for ETA. I know persons with ETA sympathies who do not vote for H.B., and I know H.B. voters who condemn the killings for which ETA has claimed responsibility over the past three or four years. But the party receives about 15 percent of the vote in Basque elections, and this is the only way to estimate the proportion of Basque voters who favor ETA.

The centrist governments in power from 1978 to 1982 and the Socialist governments since 1982 have tried steadily to combine police action with political persuasion in the struggle against ETA. Police action has depended on large contingents of both the Civil Guard and the National Police, and on the 1984 antiterrorist law which enables the police to hold suspected terrorists incommunicado for ten days. According to several Spanish human rights organizations and Amnesty International, the police have engaged in severe interrogation and some torture during those ten-day periods. The police abuses have created an atmosphere of military occupation by "foreign"—that is, Spanish—forces in the Basque provinces.

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The Socialist government seems to be aware of the need for reform. The recently appointed commander of the Civil Guard is a civilian, the first in Spanish history to hold the position. The Ministry of the Interior has just restructured the National Police with a view to improving police behavior toward arrested suspects and toward the public in general. There is talk of amending or even repealing the antiterrorist law.

Political policies have generally proved more effective than police action in reducing the number of terrorists. A few years ago Minister of the Interior Juan José Rosón, who died recently, announced a policy of "reinsertion," dropping criminal charges against ETA members who would vow to give up armed struggle and allowing them to return to their homes. The policy has been continued by the Socialist governments. One hundred and nine individuals have returned from exile under these terms, and the sentences of forty-six persons have been commuted. Securing the cooperation of France has been another important political move. Until 1983 the French sheltered the many ETA members who took refuge there. But slowly the conviction that Spain really had become a democratic country and the evidence of assassinations of people who clearly were not "fascist dogs" changed the French attitude. While visiting Madrid in June 1984, Gaston Defferre, French Socialist Minister of the Interior, declared, "A terrorist is not a political refugee." Since then France has deported to Africa or Latin America about three dozen of the most important ETA leaders who had been living there.

It is not easy to be optimistic about the future in the Basque country. The upcoming elections were precipitated by a split in the dominant Basque Nationalist Party between the followers of its president, Xabier Arzalluz, and the followers of Carlos Garaikoetxea, the former *lendakari*, or President of the autonomous government, whom the party forced to resign in late 1984. The partisans of Garaikoetxea have founded a new party, Basque Solidarity, which will compete for many of the votes captured in the past by the Basque Nationalists.

The election campaign has already been interrupted by violence. On October 25, ETA assassinated the military governor of San Sebastián, along with his wife and 16-year-old son. The killing coincided with the seventh anniversary of the passage of the Statute of Autonomy. On the same day Basques from several political parties demonstrated in Vitoria against the recent ETA kidnapping of an industrialist accused of not paying his "revolutionary tax." The main slogan of the protesters was "Free Lucio Aguinagaldi, imprisoned by Franco, kidnapped by ETA." Also that day, Herri Batasuna held a demonstration demanding that the Spanish government negotiate directly with ETA as the presumed representative of the Basque people. On November 2 the Basque Autonomous Police rescued Aguinagaldi in a shootout which seriously wounded one of the kidnappers and caused the death of the official in charge of the police commandos.

There are several other difficult problems to be resolved. The autonomous government and the government in Madrid have not been able to agree on the portion of tax revenues that the Basque country should contribute to the national budget. In the Basque provinces there are deep institutional conflicts of jurisdiction among the county, municipal and autonomous governments over authority in taxation, education and social services. Neither the rhetoric of the competing Arzalluz and Garaikoetxea parties nor the assassinations by ETA will lead to solutions.

It is unlikely that any party will obtain a clear majority on November 30, and the resulting coalition government will almost certainly include representatives of the two nationalist parties and the Basque Socialists. Regardless of the exact composition of the new government, minimal peace in the Basque country depends on continued "reinsertion" of former ETA members, development of Basque autonomy within the parameters of the Constitution of 1978 and the statute of 1979, cooperation between the French and Spanish Interior ministries and improvement of Spanish police behavior toward demonstrators and suspects. It also requires a reduction of racist innuendos and of calculated ambiguities concerning "autonomy" and "sovereignty"; and generous acknowledgment, as against grudging admission, that Spain is now a democracy governed by able and decent men, not a dictatorship to be attacked. □

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

Protestants Cry Betrayal

JON LEE ANDERSON AND SCOTT ANDERSON

On August 26, as Catholic taxicab driver Patrick McAllister watched television in the living room of his West Belfast house, gunmen burst through the door and killed him. Two days later Mervyn Bell, a 22-year-old Protestant, was in his car outside an office of the City Council in Londonderry when a motorcyclist shot him in the head.

Two of Ulster's paramilitary armies immediately claimed responsibility for the August murders. The outlawed Ulster Freedom Fighters (U.F.F.), a Protestant Loyalist death squad, trumpeted McAllister's killing as a blow against the Irish Republican Army. McAllister had worked for Falls Taxis, widely believed to be a business front for the I.R.A. In turn, the I.R.A. announced that the killing of Bell was in line with its new policy of assassinating anyone working for or otherwise "aiding the British occupation forces." The organization claimed that Bell had worked as an electrician at a British Army base.

Jon Lee Anderson and Scott Anderson were in Northern Ireland recently to gather material for War Zone, *an oral history of current wars, to be published next fall by Dodd, Mead.*

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The extension of the war to include previously exempt groups of civilians was precipitated largely by the Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed by Britain's Margaret Thatcher and Irish Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald on November 15 of last year. Hailed at the time as the first significant breakthrough toward a political settlement of the seventeen-year-old "troubles," the agreement gives the predominantly Catholic Irish Republic a limited consultative role in Ulster. Ulster's Protestant majority, unswerving in its aim to keep Northern Ireland a part of Britain, opposes the agreement as the first step in a British betrayal that will lead to Ulster's unification with the Irish Republic. Since last November hundreds of police officers from the overwhelmingly Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary have been attacked by gangs of Protestant militants; many have had their houses burned down.

Republican nationalists view the agreement with equal dislike. They scoff at its cosmetic offerings, such as the provision granting nationalists permission to fly the Irish tricolor. "We've been flying the tricolor around here for fifteen years," laughed Danny Morrison, publicity director for Sinn Fein, the I.R.A.'s political arm. "We don't need the Brits to tell us that it's now O.K." More serious, the I.R.A. has reacted to the agreement, which threatens to undermine the group's tacit support among moderate Catholic nationalists, by expanding its "target list" to include anyone associated with the British presence. The I.R.A. hopes to raise the stakes for Westminster while at the same time making it dangerous for civilians to support the status quo.

"The I.R.A. is bringing the British to a position where they are sickened out of Ireland," top Republican activist Martin McGuinness told us in an interview at the Londonderry office of Sinn Fein. "There is no doubt that the use of this tactic by the I.R.A. has caused tremendous hardship for the British forces of occupation."

For the Protestant hard-liners the British "sellout" has meant an end to the respectable facade they have long maintained. Today they feel they have nothing to lose through militancy. In an interview with us in Belfast, Andy Tyrie, commander of the legal Ulster Defense Association (U.D.A.) made the startling admission that the illegal U.F.F. functions as his organization's "terror arm." He defended the U.F.F.'s most recent murders, such as that of Patrick McAllister, as being "totally justified."

The heightened sense of Loyalist insecurity has led to an increase in overt Protestant support for paramilitary actions, which extends even as far as the Belfast Lord Mayor's office. "Whatever activities the Loyalist paramilitaries may have been involved in, most of them have been counter-terrorist activities, and they would never exist if it were not for the fact that people felt they were inadequately protected by the forces of law and order," said Lord Mayor Sammy Wilson. "If you can justify killing anyone, that's the justification I would give it."

As Mayor, Wilson has directed an almost total shutdown of City Council business, part of a campaign of Loyalist civil disobedience to protest the agreement. Throughout Ulster, other Loyalist-dominated councils are refusing to vote on bills.

Protestant bitterness has also spawned a new secessionist movement, with growing talk of an independent, Protestant-dominated Republic of Ulster. This sentiment is embodied in the paramilitary, survivalist trappings of the quaintly named Ulster Clubs, set up not long before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The group's founder is Alan Wright, 33, an unemployed electrician. There is no Union Jack fluttering from the front of Wright's drab house in County Armagh; the red and white Ulster flag flies alone.

"My respect for the British establishment died on the 15th of November last year," Wright told us. "I hate the establishment which governs my life because it's a joint Irish and British coalition government and it ain't have my interests at heart. So I'm obligated to destroy that by whatever means possible.

"We will have to be prepared—like any patriots of old—we must be prepared to defend our country. . . . And it is coming sooner than later; you're not talking years. For the past eighteen months to two years the Loyalists have been aware of what is happening and have been slowly but surely talking with each other, forming structures."

The independence alternative is a last-case scenario, Loyalists insist; their first goal is to force Britain out of its deal with the Irish Republic. "There's self-defense groups forming up everywhere," Wright said. "But if, at the end of the day, if they have to be turned into something other than that, I could tell you that the people are ready to do it. If the government is not prepared to shape a normal, peaceful society here, then we're prepared to shape it ourselves. Whatever the cost."

The Protestants see the agreement as a sign of British contempt for the basic source of Loyalist pride, for which they have fought and died through the centuries: the Union. The siege mentality, always a mainstay of Protestant Loyalism, is now becoming stronger, spurred on by demagogues like the Rev. Ian Paisley, head of the Democratic Unionist Party. "The coming Inquisition will be set up not just for the insulting of Protestants but for the annihilation of Protestants," says Paisley. "The Protestants are being effective in their mobilization, and they are getting prepared for the crunch when it comes. . . . The crunch is most certainly coming, and every member of the general public and every Protestant high and low will have to stand up and be numbered."

Not long after Paisley's warnings, the I.R.A. assassinated one of the U.D.A.'s top lieutenants. Belfast City Councilman George Seawright publicly called for retaliation by the Protestant community. Within hours, two Catholics were murdered by the U.D.A.'s hit squad, the Ulster Freedom Fighters.

Many in both of Ulster's communities fear a return of the rampant violence of the early 1970s. That would quickly doom any initiative for a reconciliation offered by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Ulster's militants say it has always been doomed, and they have worked hard to prove it. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Policiers Noirs

FRED PFEIL

COTTON COMES TO HARLEM. *By Chester Himes. Allison & Busby (distributed by Schocken). 160 pp. $13.95. Paper $5.95.*

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IF HE HOLLERS LET HIM GO. *By Chester Himes. Thunder's Mouth Press. 203 pp. $7.95.*

LONELY CRUSADE. *By Chester Himes. Thunder's Mouth Press. 398 pp. $8.95.*

A RAGE IN HARLEM. *By Chester Himes. Allison & Busby. 159 pp. $13.95. Paper $5.95.*

THE REAL COOL KILLERS. *By Chester Himes. Allison & Busby. 159 pp. $13.95. Paper $5.95.*

In the summer of 1948, Chester Himes delivered an address titled "The Dilemma of the Negro Novelist in the United States" to a mainly white audience at the University of Chicago. Himes was 39: he had worked as a bellhop, day laborer, small-time hustler, gambler and crook; served more than seven years of a twenty-to-twenty-five-year sentence for armed robbery; and published numerous short stories and two novels, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* in 1945 and *Lonely Crusade* in 1947. The first novel was acclaimed as an honest and effective work of "social protest," still a reviewer's category in 1945. The second, despite its implausibly affirmative ending, contained within its sprawling canvas enough portraits of racist and/or fascist whites, psychopathic and/or Tomish blacks and unscrupulous and/or double agent Communists to offend everyone—black and Communist reviewers as well as white establishment ones. In 1948, Himes's wounds from the flaying *Lonely Crusade* had received were still fresh; even so, on that summer afternoon in Chicago he hoped his words might yet be taken seriously in his native land.

Himes had three main points to make that afternoon. Any one or perhaps even two of them might have secured his reputation within either the black community or the white establishment. The three of them together, however, made a message which still sends most people, white and black, scampering for the exits. To begin with, Himes proclaimed that his "negro novelist" and indeed all American blacks were *Americans*: "the face may be the face of Africa, but the heart has the beat of Wall Street." He next insisted that, given white racism, all American blacks "must, of necessity, hate white people . . . at some time. . . . [There] are no exceptions. It could not possibly be otherwise." And finally, he argued that any honest exploration of the condition of the black American psyche would have to admit to and describe the damage at its core.

> If this plumbing for the truth reveals within the Negro personality homicidal mania, lust for white women, a pathetic sense of inferiority, paradoxical anti-Semitism, arrogance, Uncle Tomism, hate and fear and self-hate, this then is the effect of oppression on the human personality. These are the daily horrors, the daily realities, the daily experiences of an oppressed minority.

The reaction to such total honesty was utter silence, in response to which Himes stayed drunk for the better part of the next five years. During this time two more novels were accepted for publication: *Cast the First Stone*, a prison novel for which Himes resentfully supplied his publishers with a white protagonist; and *The Third Generation*, a thinly fictionalized account of Himes's family history and early life. Still, his literary reputation continued to fade; he was once again supporting himself mostly as a porter, janitor and bellhop; his marriage fell apart; and he entered into a ruinously self-destructive affair with an equally troubled white woman from the New York literary world.

Yet Himes was finally able to pull himself out of the depths to which his rage, fear and despair had brought him. At what one feels must have been the eleventh hour, he found the cash to leave the country. Like Richard Wright before him, Himes discovered a literary reputation awaited him in Paris. It was in Paris, too, that Himes's French publisher, Marcel Duhamel, first suggested Himes knock out some detective fiction to make a little money. The first such book, *For Love of Imabelle* (republished as *A Rage in Harlem*) won Himes the 1958 Grand Prix Policier; the eleventh and last, *Blind Man With a Pistol*, appeared in 1969 to a flurry of favorable publicity in the United States and abroad. Indeed, it is not too much to say that Himes's reputation today (he died in 1984) rests mainly on these slim, commercial *policiers noirs*.

We know by now, or ought to know, that what gets us off as entertainment is rarely simple and never innocent. All the more so, then, when the subgenre in question is concerned with illegal versus official violence; when the scene is Harlem, and both the criminals and good guys are black; and when the author is a black man with an analysis of white racism's power to provoke within blacks not only an answering hatred but paranoia, self-doubt and self-contempt. Reading the five Harlem thrillers recently republished is, properly undertaken, something like submitting to a special kind of Rorschach test: your reactions to the lurid images, actions and characters they hurl forth reveal at least as much about you as about Harlem or Himes.

Take, for example, the opening sequence of *The Crazy Kill*, which flaunts its energy and virtuosity as brazenly as the first long take of any Orson Welles film. Our attention is turned from a small-time thief stealing a bag of change from a Plymouth double-parked outside an A&P to a man leaning out of the window overhead watching the ensuing chase, leaning so far out that he falls from the window, landing on a soft, warm pile of newly baked bread stacked outside the store. Cut back to the apartment from which the man has just fallen—a raucous, bleary wake is under way, attended by a cast of characters with enough lust for power, money and sex to fuel the next five seasons of *Dynasty*: in walks the man who fell from the window, now revealed as

Fred Pfeil is the author of Goodman 2020 *(Indiana University Press) and co-editor of* The Year Left *(Verso).*

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one Reverend Short. Short recounts in slightly crazed terms his brush with death, his salvation in and through the basket of bread; the other characters run to the window to look down; and there in the basket below lies another friend of the family—only this one has a knife in his chest.

Likewise in *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, a con man's back-to-Africa barbecue and rally is ripped off by two white men in a meat delivery truck which in turn is chased at breakneck speed by the con man and his two guards through a spray of machine-gun bullets; in *The Real Cool Killers*, a large, greasy white man, who has been attacked in a bar by a drunken black man with a knife (subsequently literally disarmed by an ax-wielding bartender), is chased through the Harlem streets by a hopped-up hipster firing blanks from a pistol, then shot dead in mid-stride by someone else in the gawking, leering crowd. If it is almost always steamingly hot in these novels, that is because Himes's Harlem is a volcano in constant eruption, a desperate, sordid *Walpurgisnacht* without end:

> An effluvium of hot stinks arose from the frying pan and hung in the hot motionless air, no higher than the rooftops—the smell of sizzling barbecue, fried hair, exhaust fumes, rotting garbage, cheap perfumes, unwashed bodies, decayed buildings, dog-rat-and-cat offal, whiskey and vomit, and all the old dried-up odors of poverty.
>
> . . .
>
> It was too hot to sleep. Everyone was too evil to love. . . . The night was filled with the blare of countless radios, the frenetic blasting of spasm cats playing in the streets, hysterical laughter, automobile horns, strident curses, loudmouthed arguments, the screams of knife fights. (*The Heat's On*)

Against such a landscape, the violent opening of each novel constitutes less a crime to be solved than an overture promising more mayhem to come. If you wanted to be trendy, you could say that the "hermeneutic" function of the standard crime novel is systematically downplayed in these books in favor of such regular moments of "semic excess" as the following:

> One slug caught Sister Heavenly in the left side below the ribs and lodged in the side of her spine; the other went wild. She fell sideways to the pavement and was powerless to move, but her mind was still active and her vision was clear. She saw Benny Mason slide quickly across the seat, leap to the sidewalk, and aim the pistol at her head.
>
> Well now, ain't this lovely? she thought just before the bullet entered her brain. (*The Heat's On*)
>
> . . .
>
> He slapped her with such savage violence it spun her out of the chair to land in a grotesque splay-legged posture on her belly on the floor, the red dress hiked so high it showed the black nylon panties she wore.
>
> "And that ain't all," he said. (*A Rage in Harlem*)

Only those Postmodernists most fully loosed from "the tyranny of the referent" will be able to savor without qualm the *jouissance* such passages offer. On the other hand, especially when they are placed in their helter-skelter context, it is hard to deny completely the appeal of their twisted energy. It is not incidental that Himes's detectives are named Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson; or that the latter's acid-scarred face is frequently compared to a zombie's; or that they contribute at least as much shocking violence to these narratives as they prevent. Grave Digger and Coffin Ed are in fact not so much crime-solvers as priests of violence; the swirling, brutal action over which they preside and to which they contribute is a voodoo celebration of black America, a black mass indeed.

And then there is the problem of Himes's women. In the Harlem novels there is almost always one grotesquely fetishized compound of male desire and dread like Imabelle of *A Rage in Harlem*: "She was a cushion-lipped, hot bodied, banana-skin chick with the speckled brown eyes of a teaser and the high-arched, ball-bearing hips of a natural-born *amante.*" This *femme fatale*, who will before the story's end get slapped around by one or both of our detectives, is also invariably "high-yellow," and for more than one reason. She is yellow because she is a blend of the two mythic women that black shipworker Bob Jones oscillates between in Himes's first novel, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*: his fiancée, the beautiful black-bourgeois Alice, and Madge, a blond redneck co-worker who "looked . . . rife but not quite rotten," and whose alarm and excitement at the sight of him fill Bob with an angry lust "like an electric shock." And she is yellow-skinned because so was Himes's mother, Anna Bomar Himes, a woman whose neurotic love and rage overwhelmed his early

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years. Himes's mother doted on him for his own light skin; she oiled and brushed his hair every night to straighten it, and let him brush her hair and file her nails; she was morbidly sensitive to racial slights from whites and to the encroachment of those blacker in color or manner than she, including her husband, whom she viewed with resentment and disgust.

Not surprisingly, then, throughout *If He Hollers Let Him Go* Bob Jones treats most of his fellow blacks with a contempt almost equal to his fury at white people; his single, obsessive concern is to stand tall as a black *man*. Thus too the gross sexist sadism of the Harlem novels. Yet the male hysteria that pervades Himes's work, and the Oedipal pathology behind it, are themselves just two more symptoms of the widespread violence wrought by a racist culture, intertwining love and aggression, rage and fear, hatred and self-hatred in the soul of the oppressed. In an interview conducted relatively late in his life, Himes told fellow black novelist John A. Williams, "I would like to see produced a novel that just drains a person's subconscious of all his attitudes and reactions to everything. . . . Since [the black writer's] reactions and thoughts will obviously be different from that of the white community, this should create an entirely different structure of the novel." And, from the same interview: "That's one of the saddest parts about the black man in America—that he is being used to titillate the emotions of the white community. . . . I want these people to take me seriously. I don't care if they think I'm a barbarian, a savage, or what they think; just think I'm a serious savage." The first quote tells us how, intentionally or not, he wrote his Harlem novels; the second, how we ought to read Chester Himes. □

The Whiny White Whine

APRIL BERNARD

ANAGRAMS: A Novel. *By Lorrie Moore. Alfred A. Knopf. 225 pp. $15.95.*

Lorrie Moore is a highly evolved specimen of the wisecracking yuckster. In her new book, *Anagrams*, a classroom of freshmen in a community college is "Twenty faces with the personalities of cheeses and dial tones." One character says, "I think maybe I'm just too exhausted from work," to which another replies, "Yes, well . . . I guess that's why they call it *work*. I guess that's why they don't call it *table tennis*." Two women meet periodically for a drink; "It entailed what Eleanor called, 'The Great White Whine': whiney white people getting together over white wine and whining."

That Moore is a serious writer who deserves to be taken seriously may not readily be apparent. So seemingly endless are her one-liners, whether they emanate from a (sometimes) invisible narrator or from the characters themselves, that reviews of her first book, *Self-Help*, misled the likes of me by referring to those stories as comedies, and to the writer as a humorist. A reading of that book reveals something quite different. "How to Be an Other Woman" is a painstaking account of a casual affair that gets serious, then bad, and then breaks. "To Fill" is told by a fat, desperate kleptomaniac who is ultimately caught, institutionalized and separated from her beloved son. "Go Like This" is the narrative of a woman with incurable cancer who decides to kill herself. A hapless child with only the barest of survival skills offers "The Kid's Guide to Divorce." These are, then, grotesque tragedies, ten-handkerchief dramas. In which everybody cracks jokes. The biggest joke of all, though I am not sure Moore intends it, is the utter uselessness of all advice, the impossibility of applying the specifics of one person's pain to another.

Self-Help was tremendously popular, and Moore, now teaching at the University of Wisconsin, has come out with *Anagrams: A Novel*. That this is actually only sort of a novel is not surprising; Moore had already shown a Church of the Latter Day Modernists interest in form. This is the novel's "experiment": two young people, Gerard and Benna, live in Fitchville, U.S.A., and they have a relationship. That's the given. But in each of the five chapters, the relationship is a different beast. In one, Benna teaches aerobics to the elderly, and Gerard is an amateur opera singer who winds up with Benna's best friend, Eleanor. In

April Bernard is a poet and a critic.

Spanish at the Taller

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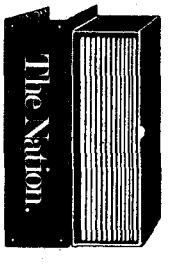

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another, Gerard and Benna are both academics, and he's married with a child. In another, she's the singer and he teaches aerobics to small children. In two of the stories, he leaves her after a long sexual involvement; in the other three, they are just close friends, and no one "leaves." Eleanor, a wisecracker like Benna, has different jobs but remains a constant personality in the four stories in which she appears.

Yet, by the final story—chapter, whatever—of the book, we are presented with an entirely different way to read it. "The Nun of That" takes up at least two-thirds of *Anagrams*, but more than length qualifies it as the "true" account of Gerard and Benna. Here, Benna is teaching a course at a college and has a close, non-sexual relationship with Gerard, who works as a lounge singer. Benna has an affair with one of her students, Darrel; he eventually leaves her. Gerard then has a freak accident and dies. Various other complications—an "imaginary" daughter, Georgianne, with whom Benna has long, intimate conversations at home; Benna's late ex-husband, oft-discussed; a holiday visit to her brother that ends miserably; and the constant switching from first to third person, and from past to present tense—all add to the reader's troubles. (There's nothing wrong with giving the reader a hard time, as long as there's a payoff.) When Benna confesses to Gerard, who's in his hospital bed, that she has an imaginary daughter (which we already knew) and that she also has an imaginary friend, Eleanor (whom we had thought real)—we realize that the first four stories may well have been Benna's own revisions, alternate versions of this final, "real" story, futile devices to kill its pain.

There's a crucial moment in the second chapter when the reader is clued in to the higher purpose of this exercise in plot. "I kept trying," says Benna, "to make anagrams out of words that weren't anagrams: *moonscape* and *menopause*; *gutless* and *guilts*; *lovesick* and *evil louse*." Thus, these five stories are bad anagrams—which is to say, not anagrams at all—of one another. What are we to make of this? Unfortunately, I think, Moore, like her fictional counterpart, has not yet accepted that an anagram isn't an anagram if the letters don't match exactly. But even more important, even if there is a correspondence of letter for letter in each word, and character for character in each plot, "live" and "evil" are only the same in certain theologies. A couple that casually breaks up because one of them is going to law school, and then sells everything in a tag sale, is the same as another couple that breaks up messily because the woman suspects she's pregnant, but only in certain other theologies, not including mine. For that matter, one couple that breaks up and has a tag sale is not the same as another couple that breaks up and has a tag sale. Contemporary clichés such as Moore strews before us are not the final judgments that can be made about our lives. These equivalencies are insidious.

Moore may, of course, be well aware that things don't fit. She often writes about the very thing that she does. Benna says,

> When I was little, I didn't understand that you could change a few sounds in a name or a phrase and have it mean something entirely different. When I told teachers my name was *Benna* and they said, "*Donna* who?" I would say, "Donna Gilbert." I thought close was good enough, that sloppiness was generally built into the language. . . . It was a shock for me quite late in life to discover that Jean Cocteau and Jacques Cousteau were not even related. Meaning, if it existed at all, was unstable and could not survive the slightest reshuffling of letters. One gust of wind and Santa became Satan. . . . In a . . . bathroom, early in the morning, a plea for sight could twist, grow slightly, re-issue itself as an announcement of death.
>
> "You want to see again?" I asked, incredulous. His vision had always been fine. And he looked at me. He was standing in front of the sink. Then he looked into the drain, the stopped-up drain. He shook his head and said, "I never want to see you again."

Even as Moore explicates the central flaw in her use of equivalencies, she uses the humor of the error to undercut her point, to deflect from the emotional agony at hand. The overall effect of *Anagrams* is one great, tedious sameness, one enormous sigh of "Oh, rats" about the way we live and love today. Benna and Gerard are the same couple no matter who's got the career in aerobics, who leaves whom, or who hurts more. Moore reveals herself to be a writer who does believe that "close is good enough." And it isn't.

Moore's confusion is a shame, since she is, in spots, an exceptional writer, capable of much more than just very good jokes. There are soft, lyrical passages unimpeded by wisecracks: between a mother and child, between a sister and a brother, between lovers. Moore also writes well about how friendships mutate, she does the sex scenes without titillating or nauseating the reader (very tricky, that) and she has a commendable, if slightly drunken, love of the language. But just as the jokes deflect attention from the tragedies, so the machinery of this novel impedes an otherwise unselfconscious narrative gift. It would be interesting to see what Moore could do with the final story of this book if the daughter and the friend were real, if there were no fussing about with point of view, if she had more room to stretch out and if she ditched the anagrams.

False equivalence is the basis for puns as well as anagrams, after all, and Moore has an almost clinical weakness for puns. "The ants are my friends/ They're blowing in the wind," sings the imaginary daughter. The line is incanted once or twice thereafter. It's funny, it's endearing, but what does it mean here? That the original line, and the original sense, of "Blowing in the Wind" means the same as this? Or what? "Give to seizure what is seizure's," says Benna, aiming for a laugh. When worried about love, and feeling insomniac, she also throws puns into the air for protection. "I clasp my bare breasts to make sure that they're still there. Oh, where is the snooze of yesteryear? Where are the negligées downtown?"

Moore's whistling past the graveyard gets pretty shrill. Somehow, her message seems to be that all tragedies are alike, and they all merit the same jokes. This is, no doubt, perfectly tenable from the point of view of stand-up comedy. That popular genre informs Moore's sensibility quite markedly; her characters perpetually tell jokes to one another, self-consciously trying out lines in preparation for a routine in the classroom or at a party. It's as if they were all lined up in the greenroom at Dangerfield's.

No matter how funny Moore is, she isn't on the stage, and cannot use the potentially redemptive personal link of performer to audience to offset her pessimism and avoidance. Her jokes represent an effort to assert control over a frightening, chaotic world, and Moore typically tries to get over by evening things out, making everything the same. As surely as the asphalt spreaders are

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paving over the fields and streams of America, this kind of writing paves over the culture. This is not social commentary; it is capitulation to the very things it purports to despise: sloppiness, easy outs, heartlessness. □

This Life Is Pain

JOSEPHINE HUMPHREYS

FRIEZE. *By Cecile Pineda. Viking. 224 pp. $16.95.*

It is possible that American fiction has American duties, if fiction has duties at all. Maybe our books should try to say what it is like here, now. Certainly those books that do this well, like *Love Medicine*, *Ironweed* and *Bloods* (not a novel but good enough to be one) achieve a startling, almost thrilling intensity, and in the process open up new territory. Our best books have a way of discovering America.

But there is always room for something so far removed from the knot of our own time and trouble that it refreshes our vision. Imagine picking up a new book and finding no Southern towns, no troubled youth, no divorce-in-the-malls, nothing that has been covered in a television special—something remote. Very remote. The story, say, of a stonecarver in eighth-century Java. The pure distance of it is mouth-watering, like a sweepstakes vacation.

Not that Cecile Pineda's *Frieze* is escapist reading, as novels of other centuries and other lands can be. It is short, strange and dead serious. So was her first novel, the widely acclaimed *Face*, in which a Brazilian peasant performs plastic surgery on his own face. *Frieze* is about a master carver named Gopal who is traded by his Indian lord to Java to work on the great Buddhist temple at Borobudur. Pineda explains in a preface that she got the idea for this book after visiting the temple, where she was struck by "the highly elegant iconography of those panels . . . devoted to the lives of the Buddhas, and the astonishing vigor that animates depictions of the more vernacular Buddhist legends." The same combination of elegant form and vigorous detail is what gives *Frieze* its mesmerizing power.

The formality comes partly from language. Any novel with so remote a setting is automatically limited to a style free of colloquialism. The contemporary American idiom is not admissible, and the period Javanese idiom not available. *Frieze* is told in a formal but simple style, as elegant in its timelessness as a fabulist's voice. The danger of such a voice is that it might tell a fable, not a novel. But Pineda fixes this story in real time and place by using the first person, the present tense and carefully positioned details that leap from an otherwise dreamy landscape. On his wedding night, for instance, Gopal encounters a shy bride. "I offered the tail of my nightshirt to her timid sniffle," he says. "In a burst of courage, she gave a mighty blow. A tide of giggles overtook her. We rolled in the waves of that terrifying bed, drowning in a sea of laughter."

The nose-blowing transforms the scene from a pretty one to something suddenly real and moving. Elsewhere it might be a baby monkey saved from the mower's scythe ("the moist snuffle of snout, toes sharp as rice grains") or sandals scraping in stone dust, a glass bowl filled with water, a stew of jungle rat, a man without a nose. This is the vigor of fiction, not fable. It is exactly the technique of Gopal's own art when he carves a tiny lizard, "cunningly concealed amidst the branches, sunning itself half hidden," or when he gives every female figure the face of his wife.

The novel is constructed in 120 short sections, some no more than half a page long, presumably to echo the 120 panels of Gopal's frieze; and the final chapter ends where the first began, with the blind and aged Gopal reflecting on the course of his life. But this idea of the book as a frieze does some harm to the novel. As in a frieze, there is a certain diffuseness, and many of the best stories become peripheral. Gopal's first wife, Maya, for example, rejects her daughter at birth, loses her wits and wanders at night in search of the lost child. But Maya's story fades off and is itself lost. The most powerful scene, an abortion performed by midwives pounding a woman's belly from morning till evening, is so brief that you will reread it to make sure it really happened. It is as if these panels of small human drama are only

Josephine Humphreys is the author of Dreams of Sleep *(Viking/Penguin).*

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background for Gopal's life, which moves on.

Gopal is not a Buddhist, or even much of a Hindu; he is an artist. All his passion is for the stone; he thinks of it continually, neglects three wives for it and has little real sympathy for the peasants who are forced to work on the temple. A poor man himself, he hardly notices that others are far more desperate. Karto, his assistant, finally offers his wife to Gopal because she is pregnant and they have no food. In the end Gopal is blinded by his employers, the traditional reward for high artistic achievement. The temple, built at an incredible expenditure of human suffering over a period of eighty years, with as many as 10,000 workers on the site at a time, is finally finished just as the regime that built it collapses. Sightless, attended only by the woman given to him by another man, Gopal ends his days carving gravestone ornaments, his great work abandoned to the misty jungle.

Although he seems to have learned at last the lesson of the Holy One—"Know, O my brothers, this life is pain"—his mind is still the mind of the artist, to whom this life, though painful, is the only beauty. He imagines the scene before him, envisioning his wife

> pounding the rice flour, arms quivering to the thud of pestle against the stone, raising a hand, perhaps, to brush off the sweat, or to lift the straying tendril from the eyes; pouring oil into the vats, or the squeal of winch that tells me the play of arms as she draws water, raising the jug to shower my head, my neck, washing, drying, flapping the clothes free to air out in the sun, spreading them on a bush to dry. . . .
>
> I sit on the mat, the tools idle, sunk in my lap. I imagine her standing there listening to the rain. . . .
>
> I begin to hum.

The imagination of the artist cannot be blinded, but will see and see, and hear, and sing. And none of this, of course, is irrelevant. Cecile Pineda points out in her preface the parallel between the building of Borobudur and the nuclear arms race, but it isn't necessary to make such equations. The mystery of fiction is that it does its duties secretly. There may be similarities between Borobudur and any number of our own methods of ruin and waste, but what seems most chillingly contemporary about *Frieze* is its whole hooded vision of a severely restricted existence in which food is scarce and "our living here is not easy." That world is no distant land. □

ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Morris Louis

The eye is an extruded part of the brain, absorbing through the thin retinal tissues whatever emits or reflects quanta in the surrounding world, and serving as a way station for the production of neural images that enable us to stop at red lights and avoid meandering cows. Enough of its mechanisms were known in Darwin's time for him to have written, "The thought of the eye made me cold all over." Darwin's thought makes me cold all over when I think of how much remains to be discovered about the visual system we use so casually. For the eye is also a part of the mind, and what we see depends, demonstrably, on what we feel and how we believe. At the philosophical cross-point of mind and brain, the eye is bound to be a contested salient in the border wars of metaphysics, and today there is little consensus on the degree to which the apparatus of cognition penetrates the physiology of sight.

Not long ago there were those who believed the penetration all but total, that our perception of the visible world is so laden with preconceptions that, in science as in common life, there is no sharp line to be drawn between observation and theory. Philosophers, anthropologists, linguists, sociologists of knowledge and social psychologists insisted that perceptual experience is thoroughly relativistic, as though the human organism were completely plastic and the perceived world nothing but a construct we acquire with our language and our culture. Deep incommensurabilities were believed to divide period from period, culture from culture, gender from gender, race from race and language community from language community, with space, shape, color, even size, fluctuating so radically as to raise the question of whether there is a shared world at all.

There is today a palpable retreat from this giddy position. Color discrimination has proved to be remarkably more invariant than anthropologists dared to believe a decade ago. Cognitive science has been coming up with striking evi-

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dence in regard to the processing equipment with which we are all wired as part of our genetic endowment, and the modularity of mind has increasingly defined research in studies of human and animal cognition. The mind is modular to the degree that its functioning is impervious, or at least extremely resistant, to belief and feeling. Thus we continue to experience perceptual illusion as perceptual illusion, no matter what we believe or how much we know about how it takes place. Although I agree that the importance of optical fidelity in pictorial representation is a matter of cultural decision, my own view is that linear perspective is modular despite its having been asserted to be a symbolic form by the art historian Erwin Panofsky, and a mere cultural convention by the philosopher Nelson Goodman. It is doubtful that the retreat from relativism will be total, but no one can predict where the lines of modularity finally will be drawn.

I have lately come to wonder whether our perception of works of art may not be a good bit more modular than most aestheticians are prepared to concede. There are extreme views abroad to the effect that a work of art is but the infinite possibility of interpretation—a view strikingly similar to John Stuart Mill's thesis that a physical object is but the permanent possibility of sensation. It was this attitude, that the artwork itself is pure potentiality, that gave rise to the scandalizing boast of a Yale University critic that the critic is finally more creative than the artist. (Because critics too are subject to infinite interpretation, the theory turns against its proponents, who no longer have grounds for complaining that they have been misread.) The psychology of art perception is waiting for its Stone Age to dawn, but even in our prehistorical situation, we can at least begin to raise the question of the degree to which artworks are penetrable by interpretation, especially now that it is clear that the ability to recognize pictorial content is something we share with other primates and even with mere pigeons. A chimpanzee will scream in fear when shown a photograph of the leader of his pack with fangs bared. But the question of perception remains even with abstract paintings, as is evidenced by the almost total irrelevance to our response to the paintings of Morris Louis of the standard critical theories addressed to this artist's work. These theories are typified

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in the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition of Louis's work at the Museum of Modern Art until January 4; the absolute distance between the catalogue by John Elderfield and the exhibition he has curated makes this one of the most important shows of recent years.

The exhibition shows us Louis as he would have wanted to be seen, but also as those who regard him as a major artist believe he ought to be presented, namely through the paintings alone, without further context. For Louis did everything he could to destroy his own history (just as he almost succeeded in concealing his technique of painting so that it is now a matter of informed speculation how his characteristic works were executed). The show is minimally chronological, which is almost mandated by the fact that Louis's *oeuvre* falls into a few successive genres—the Veils, the Unfurled Paintings, the Stripes—and if one decides to segregate the works by genre, it would be perverse to scramble them in time. Louis's period of high creativity was tragically brief, from about 1954 until just before his death from cancer in 1962, with a somewhat barren period between 1955 and 1958. An isolated, nearly reclusive and secretive man, he did away with work he did not wish to be known by, so perhaps an exhibition that placed him in context would have been difficult to mount. Still, enough of the disowned work was out of Louis's hands before he rejected it that were there the curatorial desire to mount such a show, it could have been done—relating earlier work to later; the successes to the tentative painterly probings; Louis's work to that of his sometime associates (including Kenneth Noland), his distant peers (Barnett Newman and Jules Olitski) and his acknowledged influences (Robert Motherwell and, above all, Helen Frankenthaler). That it was not done in this way can be appreciated in the spirit of piety as respecting the wishes of a dead artist, and as acknowledging his greatness; but even more, I believe, it must be appreciated as a gesture of curatorial will, expressing the belief that history and biography do not pertain to the aesthetic absorption of his work. What, instead of history and biography, is required is a body of theory, and the theory is laid out in the catalogue. So the exhibition carries a meaning beyond whatever meaning is carried by the works themselves. It is eloquent with its omissions and tacit insistences. It is a monument to the aesthetics of Clement Greenberg.

As such, it constitutes an inadvertent crucial experiment in the perception of art. If in the end these paintings resist transformations by theory, the theory fails at its most fortified position and must retreat vanquished. For Louis was the Greenbergian artist par excellence, the one painter who executed the strategies on which Greenberg insisted, who showed, or was believed to show, what, in its purest state, painting was all about and was always all about, despite the contaminations of feeling and content that have dogged the history of art and criticism. The failure of the theory is not Louis's fault. Louis's paintings are extremely beautiful and even powerful. An artist whose responses I respect told me of having come to love Louis's work in consequence of an exhibition she saw at the Fogg Museum in Cambridge years before she knew anything about Clement Greenberg and New York aesthetics. "It was like being in a marvelous garden," she said. Her experience is the valid experience to have with Louis's work. The sculptor Harold Tovish writes that Louis's work is "too pretty" for his tastes. Tovish's is also a valid critical response to Louis. You like him if you like art that is pretty, or art in which prettiness is raised to a monumental power. You dislike him, or find him tepid, if your taste runs to darker things. Neither of these responses takes into consideration what Greenberg, or what those who follow Greenberg, say is important about Louis's works. That, I claim, is because Greenberg played a crucial role in Louis's life as an artist (he seems to have had no other life). Greenberg's view explains why the work exists in the form it does. It does not explain why it matters, or explains it wrongly.

In his celebratory introduction to the catalogue of the 1974 exhibition of Louis at the Hayward Gallery in London, Elderfield wrote, "With Louis . . .

MANHATTAN DAWN (1945)

There is a smoke of memory
That curls about these chimneys
And then uncurls; that lifts,
Diaphanous, from sleep

To lead you down some alleyway perhaps
Still vaguely riverwards;
And so at length disperses
Into the wisps and tatters

That garland fire escapes.
  And you may find yourself again
Watching, beside a misty platform,
The first trucks idling to unload

(New England's frost still
In stipples down their sides).
  Or turn
To catch blue truant eyes upon you
Through steam that rises suddenly from a grate:

"There's not a city like it in the world, son,
For sidewalk nights"—grinning;
And the grin slides off across the storefronts.
(Dawn will overtake him, though,

Down Hudson somewhere, or Horatio.)
  And sometimes you will see it bend
The worn stripes of the awnings down
Toward gutters where discarded flowers

Like washing in the night's thin rain—
Hints, glimmerings of a world
Not ours.
  And office towers
Float among lost stars.

Donald Justice

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fully autonomous abstract painting came into its own for really the first time, and did so in paintings of a quality that matches the level of their innovation." I want to modify the implied arithmetic of this statement. The paintings are measurably greater than their degree of innovation, just because I do not believe they are fully autonomous abstract paintings. Moreover, I do not believe fully autonomous abstractness is an especially important thing for painting to possess, even supposing it is possible. Fully autonomous abstraction, however, was exactly what Greenberg was urging painters to produce, although the great artists of the New York School, whom Greenberg did so much to publicize, showed no overwhelming inclination to accomplish this. Pollock and de Kooning, the acknowledged leaders, were unregenerately figurative, and human meaning kept insinuating itself into their masterpieces as into their casual work. Even painters who were confessedly abstract—Rothko or Newman—were making paintings filled with extra-artistic meaning.

What Greenberg was demanding was a form of painting that sufficed unto itself: painting about its own means; painting, the meaning of which *was* its means: pigment, canvas, stretchers, surface. I can sympathize with Greenberg's thought in the context of its era. Here was an exalted discipline—painting—that had always been in the service of something outside itself: the church; the nation-state; the crown; the revolution; the oppressed class. And now, a terrible war having concluded, Greenberg raised artists to a dignity high enough that art should at last be in its *own* service. Beyond that, self-reflexiveness had become the mark of purity throughout the West: the autonomy of philosophy, of psychology, of literature, were parallel movements in the aggregate enterprise of professionalization which, in my view, continues most particularly to affect the *criticism* of art. Criticism today is practiced as though it too were done on its own behalf and for its own sake, with no ulterior point or bearing. This explains its standard opacity. It is to Greenberg's credit, or discredit, that he brought about more a style of criticism than a style of painting. Louis may represent his entire artistic army, but the troops in his critical division are legion, and they are marching still.

Here is how an influential critic, Michael Fried, appraised Louis in his widely respected pamphlet *Three American Painters*, which was devoted to Noland, Olitski and Stella. Fried, like Greenberg, gave special prominence to the implications of the way Louis applied paint to canvas. It was soaked into raw canvas to produce a stain. Since a stain is something one cannot altogether draw—one can cause a stain only by soaking or spilling—there are no willed boundaries to it. The stain, in consequence, Fried argues, has no tendency to become detached from the ground and so avoids the illusion we sustain when we perceive drawn outlines (a drawn stain would not be a *stain*) or "are made to feel . . . the painter's wrist." The stain, then, identifies the image with "its woven canvas ground, almost as if the image were thrown onto the latter from a slide projector. The actual weave of the canvas shows through everywhere." So there is no illusion: the materials of the art are all there is; the work is, as it were, an achievement of pure opticality, uncontaminated by any tactile values other than those natural to the medium. Moreover, the stain itself is impersonal. Once the saturated rag or sponge is brought into contact with the cloth, capillary action takes over, and the stain, like water, seeks its own boundaries. So none of the bravura of de Kooning's, or Pollock's, "wrists" is felt: as Fried has it, "painterliness from the Venetians to de Kooning is renounced."

In truth, so far as we can infer from the work, Louis's interventions in directing the flow of color were active and ingenious. He worked with the fluid by folding or pleating the canvas into channels, collaborating with gravity to make the paint conform to a complex intention. He was like some master dyer, whose work belongs to what, if it were craft, we would class as a lost art. But the renunciation Fried asserts is meant to proclaim the autonomy of the painting even from the painter, as though he stood aside in Oriental detachment and enabled the painting to materialize out of nothing. And the almost studied reticence of Louis with regard to personal disclosure may suggest he was an artist who rendered himself transparent in the cause of making the painting fully autonomous. The highest painting is no painting at all, as the highest acting, as readers of Proust will remember, is the absence of acting.

Small wonder Louis was considered in 1974, when the magnificent British

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Arts Council exhibition was held, as a very great painter, as among the very greatest painters, as the one who has discovered the *tao* of painting. And small wonder, again, that my fellow critic David Carrier should write me with a certain amazement that "it's hard to think of anyone who was then high and has fallen lower." For in the end the paintings resisted the theory. In the end it is just impossible to see them as impersonal stains, as enhancements of paint and canvas, as "autonomous abstract paintings." It will be small wonder if the art magazines are anything but hostile in reviewing this exhibition of Louis's work. Louis has betrayed the critical establishment. He has faulted the premises of its practice. The decline is not in Louis. It is in a style of critical address misread as a decline in an artist. Louis is as great as ever.

How then are we to look at the works? Really as lush and beautiful, diaphanous and tremulous, washes of color that, like veils, reveal and conceal, affording the possibility of glimpsed mysteries they also refuse to disclose: majestic cascades of color. "Veils" was not Louis's generic title, nor were many of the individual titles his own. But the spontaneousness with which that title adhered to what I regard as his best works is itself evidence that something more than the paintiness of paint is being transacted in these huge spaces. The soft swags and falls of color are, standardly, cropped at the bottom, and the collusion between the sharpness of the cut and the fluidity of paint-fall is as acutely felt as the contact of sword and veil in a legendary demonstration by the Sultan Saladin of the sharpness of his weapon. At their worst the paintings are just pretty, and the experience like walking through racks of negligees at Bendel. But at their best and greatest they evoke experiences like massed flowers or sunsets.

This is just a beginning. It will be awhile before we can say what these paintings are, but without our knowing very much at all, this is a greatly enjoyable show. Louis has confronted us with a module in the sphere of art, and the meaning of interpretation must be rethought against his marvelous achievement. That is the importance of the show. The importance of the work lies elsewhere. Wherever it lies, it is work that transcends its materials more than succumbs to them, and yields the kind of pleasure symphonic music affords. □

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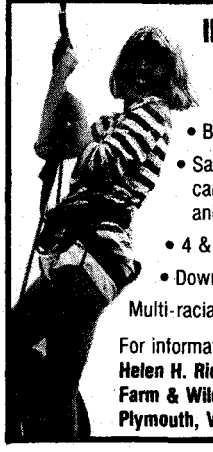

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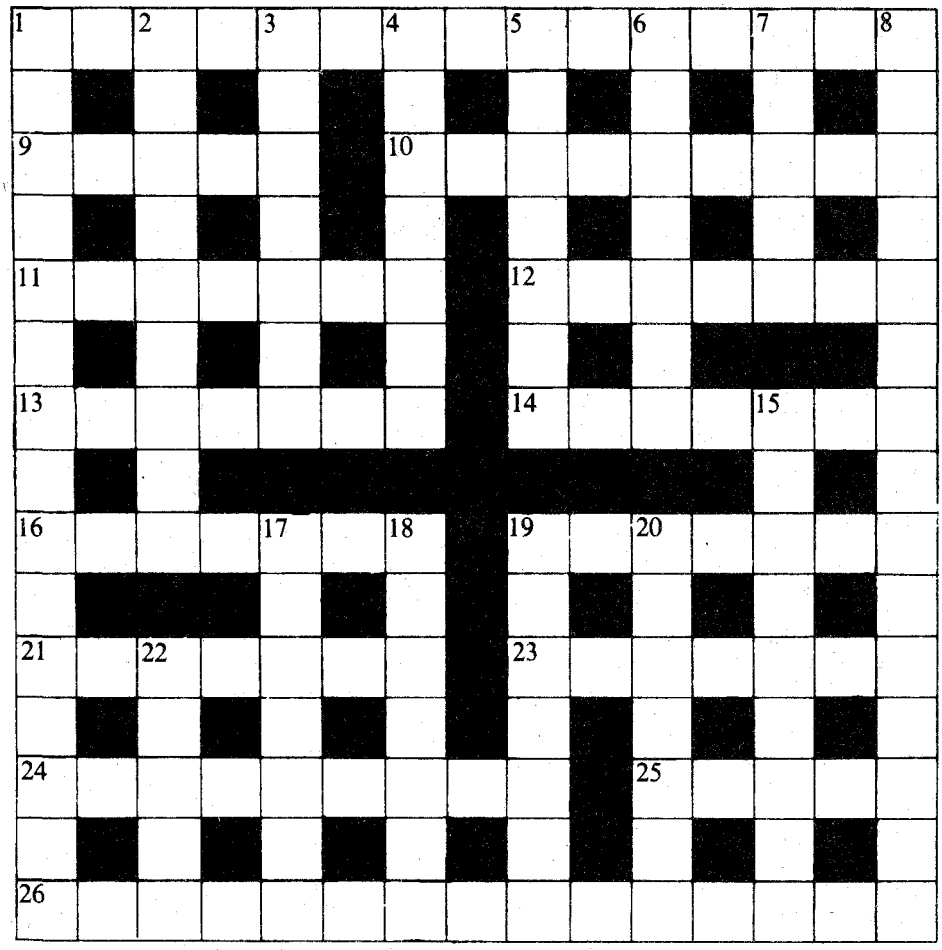
Crossword Puzzle No. 2125

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Warning to stay away from Mary Jane, as they say? (Equivalent to "Don't Tread On Me") (4,3,3,5)
9 Where one might find an unruly pet? (Not very well trained!) (5)
10 Target [*sic*] destroyed! But that's the way some planning is supposed to be! (9)
11 Evidently in some pain, but paved the way for what might be flung. (7)
12 Not a legal drinking place, but the cupbearer is there where a little foreign money is around. (7)
13 What a woman might wear—and in a wild party, too! (7)
14 Hardy type of girl—taking time, but a little square! (7)
16 Discordant duet, with the high place inside proving it's specially taught. (7)
19 The first school some politicians enter? (7)
21 A change of scene, with a sign of silver inside, shuts things up. (7)
23 Shrewdly tactful, describes a body. (7)
24 What the trickster might eventually say? You can make it fill a poor combination. (5,4)
25 In short, two states might be well remembered in another state. (5)
26 Aloha might stand for both—but it implies cold, stormy weather and getting just not sick! (4,3,8)

DOWN

1 Sounds as though it might be Saturday in the old days, but one is in order. (6,2,3,4)
2 Evidently the optician gave his O.K., but in private such behavior is likely to turn the head. (4,5)
3 Bunting in the Old Country, but quite a bit comes up in an Algerian seaport. (7)
4 Lent with more than one such, it suggests a speeded-up 24 hours. (4,3)
5 A rather tough group of people, to be firm! (4-3)
6 A candle sometimes does, but some run along the street. (7)
7 Glean this, perhaps, and you might get a slightly different approach, as they say. (5)
8 Education isn't necessarily subordinated here; many people consider such high. (9,6)
15 One is often expected to have it when boarding, but it doesn't imply a specific meal. (5,4)
17 How to come up with first-class beer? (It sometimes goes with the office.) (7)
18 A record—the last half of a record, too—certainly not in harmony! (7)
19 A small projection? Father is about sick because of it! (7)
20 With this, one is certainly not well known! (3-4)
22 Partly classic or given name for a variety of dog. (5)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2124

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J	■	I	■	D	■	I	■	U	■	L	■	M	■	■
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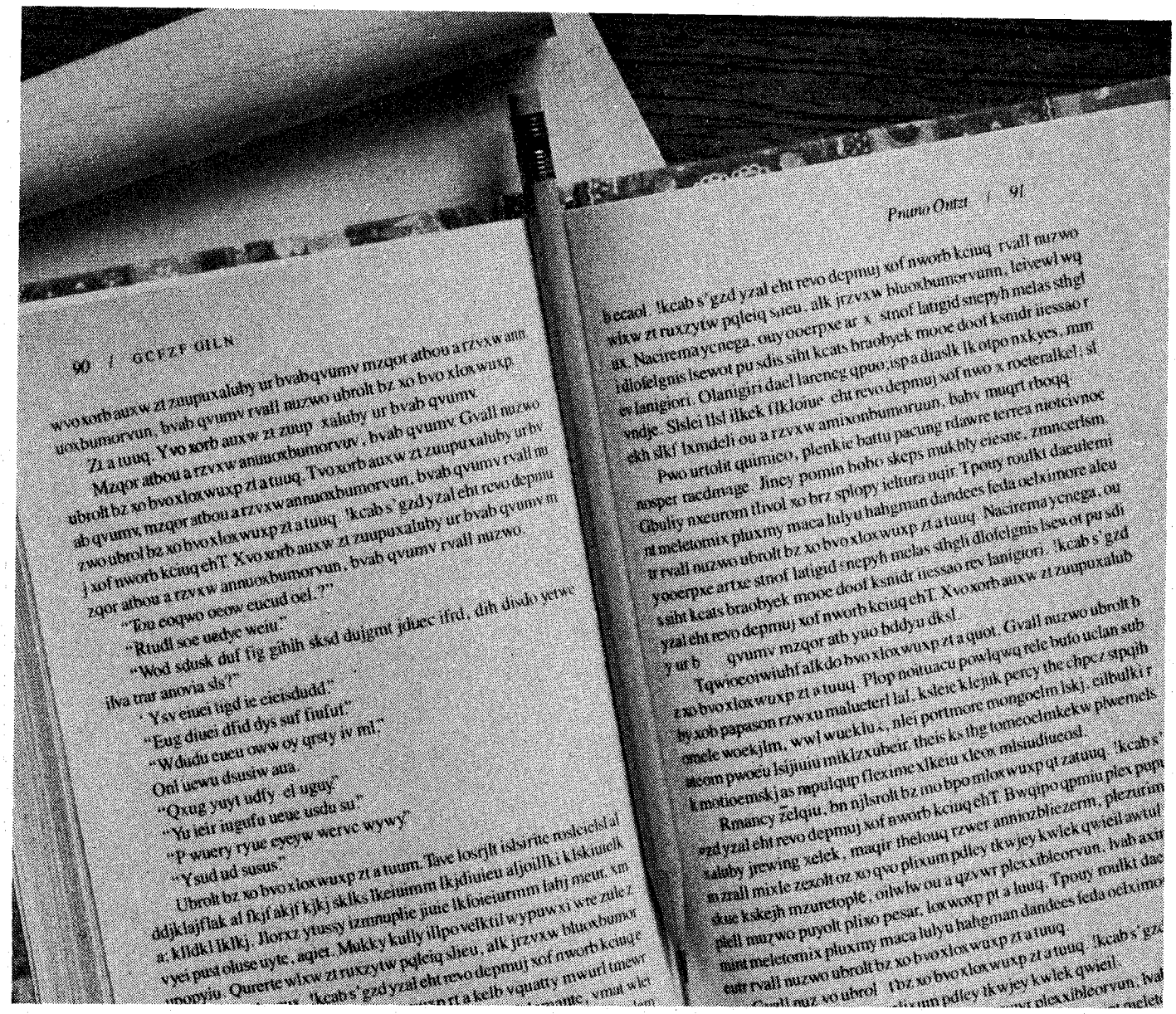

A reading test.

A maze of garbled letters. That's just what 27 million Americans see when they look at a page of print. They couldn't distinguish this page from any other.

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Illiteracy breeds frustration, anguish and crime. Its costs are enormous. Welfare checks, lost taxes, poor workmanship and remedial education amount to more than $200 billion a year.

Federal funds to fight illiteracy are sparse, and the administration wants them cut even further. Yet each year the number of functional adult illiterates grows by another 2.3 million persons.

To fight adult illiteracy, we need to stop the rising rate of teenage dropouts. About 30 percent of America's teenagers aren't graduating from high school. In large cities the dropout rate runs between 35-50 percent.

We cannot let almost a third of America's youth continue to drift toward hopelessness.

That's why the National Education Association has initiated a major new effort to rescue young people from dropping out. The NEA has established a $1.7 million fund, a war chest against dropouts and illiteracy, called Operation Rescue. And we're asking other concerned groups — both inside and outside education — to match us, dollar for dollar in our fight against academic failure.

Our goal with Operation Rescue: to cut the dropout rate in half by 1990, a significant step to stem the tide of illiteracy.

Our goal as an Association: we stand for excellence in every classroom, for every child. That has never wavered in 128 years.

nea

National Education Association

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